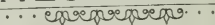


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—
JOHN S. BANKS

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Date

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Edited by the
REV. ARTHUR E. GREGORY

SCRIPTURE AND ITS WITNESSES

BY
PROFESSOR J. S. BANKS

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Outlines of Christian Evidence

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Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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INTRODUCTION

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CERTAINTY TO BE EXPECTED
- III. SCOPE OF THE PRESENT INQUIRY

INTRODUCTION

I

HISTORY OF THE SUBJECT

THE study of Christian evidences is by no means a new thing in the Church. From the first Christianity was put on its defence. All its preachers and teachers are called to be apologists or advocates in different degrees. No other religion lays such emphasis on faith; but the faith it requires is intelligent, not blind and unreasoning,—free and spontaneous, not mere submission to authority. Faith is defined as “the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen” (Heb. xi. 1). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21). “Ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. iii. 15). Even in those branches of the Church where authority

plays the largest part, faith rests ultimately on evidence accepted as sufficient.

In recent years the study has assumed a more systematic form and taken a more independent position, being treated as a distinct branch of theology and baptized with the name of Apologetics. The name alone is new, the subject is as old as the Church itself. Dr. Bruce has well pointed out that the Epistle to the Hebrews is of the nature of an apology. The writer of that Epistle was the first in a line of apologists extending to the present day.

The second century is distinguished by a school of writers known as the Greek Apologists, who made it their mission to expound the grounds of the Christian faith to the educated classes of the age. The series includes Justin Martyr (about 150 A.D.), Quadratus, Aristides, Tatian, Melito (170 A.D.), Miltiades, Athenagoras, Theophilus (180 A.D.).¹ Many of their works are extant. They are addressed some to the emperor of the day, some to the general public. Many of the arguments used have a modern ring,—evidences of design in nature, miracles and prophecy, the adaptation of the gospel to human nature and need.

Justin Martyr is an interesting figure. We

¹ Clark's Ante-Nicene Christian Library.

learn the story of his conversion from his own lips. Born of heathen parents, he earnestly seeks the truth in the different philosophical sects of his day. Failing in his search, he one day meets on the seashore an old man who tells him of the teaching of the prophets and of Christ. He spends the rest of his life in ably advocating by voice and pen his new-found faith, dying at last as a martyr for the truth. We possess of his works two Apologies addressed to the emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius, and a Dialogue with Trypho a Jew. His skill as an advocate is admirably shown in the way in which he adapts the form of his arguments to the persons he is addressing. Speaking to the heathen emperor, he appeals to the intrinsic truth of Christian doctrine; speaking to the Jew, to the fulfilment of Old Testament prediction in the life of Christ. The narrative he gives of the Saviour's life is remarkably full and detailed, and also remarkably in harmony with the narrative of the Gospels.

The Greek apologists were followed by other even greater advocates—Clement of Alexandria (died 230 A.D.), his disciple Origen (died about 254 A.D.), and the Latin Fathers, Tertullian (about 235), Arnobius, Lactantius (330), Augustine (354–430). Tertullian, the born pleader, with all

his fierce invective and declamation, gives us at least one memorable sentence, "the soul naturally Christian" (*anima naturaliter Christiana*). In this field, as in many others, Origen far outstrips his contemporaries. We know the drift of the attack made on Christianity by the philosopher Celsus from the reply which Origen made to it. Celsus took offence at the simplicity of Christ's teaching, the lowly position of the majority of Christians, and the efforts of Christians to seek and save the lost. To him the doctrine of the Incarnation seemed to degrade God and unduly magnify man. Pantheism was the only religion possible to the educated; for the ignorant masses idolatry was inevitable. We need not dwell on the replies to these objections given by Origen.

Augustine's great achievement in this field is his *City of God*, the first philosophy of history on a great scale, and full of the learning of the old world. We may quote one sentence which has a bearing on our days: "We say that all miracles are contrary to nature, but they are not so. For how is that contrary to nature which comes into being by God's will, when the will of so great a Creator is the nature of everything? Therefore, miracle is not contrary to nature, but contrary to the nature known to us. As it was not impossible to God to found what He pleased,

so it is not impossible to Him to change the natures He founded."

The Middle Ages were not without works of this class, Judaism and Mohammedanism as well as heresy being the objects of attack. The great theologian Aquinas (died 1274), in his *Summa Catholicæ Fidei contra Gentiles*, represents mediæval polemics. Raymond of Sabunde (15th century), a physician, philosopher, and theologian of Toulouse, was the Paley of his day. His *Liber Naturæ* or *Theologia Naturalis* made nature as well as Scripture a divine revelation.

English Christianity is especially rich in this field. The outbreak of deism and rationalism at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries called forth a host of able replies. Bishop Butler's *Analogy* has not been superseded, and is not likely to be, because while dealing with a temporary form of unbelief it abounds in general views which are universally valid. Its root-idea is borrowed from Origen, and is to the effect that, whoever admits nature to be the work of God cannot be surprised if Scripture contains difficulties like those of nature. It should be remembered that "the Constitution and Course of Nature," with which natural and revealed religion is shown to be in analogy, does not mean outward nature, but the system of laws and

conditions under which man is born and to which he is subject. The resemblance between the system of things in man's earthly life and the system of things taught in Scripture in regard to man's moral life, it is argued, is evidence of identity of authorship. The argument is one of great force within its proper limits. It repels objections raised on deistic premisses, while suggesting the positive proofs of revealed doctrine.

Older works, like Howe's *Living Temple*, have still great value. It was just as impossible for Butler and Howe as for Pascal to meet even passing phases of unbelief with temporary arguments. Their defences of Christian truth abound in general principles which are valid for all time. It is easier to deride than reply to their arguments. The writer is inclined to put M'Cosh's *Method of the Divine Government* and Wace's *Christianity and Morality* in the same class as the works just mentioned, although, of course, below them in rank. They are philosophical apologies, meeting the difficulties which suggest themselves to minds of a reflective turn.

Nothing is more important in Christian apology than adaptation to present objections and difficulties. Old defences of religion no more meet our needs than ancient weapons would serve in modern warfare. If Butler and

Howe had looked exclusively at their own times, they would soon have become obsolete. The work of other writers in this field is more temporary. This is true even of so good a writer as Paley. His style can never lose its charm for lovers of pure English; but the change of thought in the world has been so great since his day that his works, effective as they once were, have lost their application, and therefore much of their force for us.

A complete Christian apology, which this little work makes no pretension to be, would have to take account of three new features in the thought of the day: the development of physical science bringing with it the general acceptance of the theory of physical evolution, our increased knowledge of non-Christian religions, and the new laws of historical inquiry. If the theory of evolution were universally accepted, it would greatly modify our views of the mode of creation. The universe would then be seen to have reached its present state by a vast process of growth; but this would be the only change. The fact of creation and the necessity for an intelligent Creator would not be done away. The law of cause and effect, the impossibility of explaining order and purpose without intelligence, would remain as before. The innumerable means and

ends of which the universe consists must have been present in the original germs or cells, whenever they existed. The creation is simply put farther back. To many this method of creation is immeasurably more sublime and more inconceivable without a presiding mind, than the old one. If we should finally be compelled to adjust our thoughts to this new idea, the revolution would not be as great as took place when the modern system of astronomy was substituted for the Ptolemaic system. Christian evolutionists could render no better service than by setting themselves, as some do partially, to interpret Genesis on the new lines. It is certain that Genesis recognises development, order, and progress in the act of creation.

On the other hand, let the services rendered by science to the cause of religion be remembered. The passion for truth and reality, for accuracy and thoroughness, which was never so strong in the world as it is to-day, and which is in such perfect harmony with the spirit of Christianity, is due in large measure to the influence of science. Still more does science tend to promote humility. While increasing our knowledge, in a still greater degree it shows us our ignorance. On every side man soon reaches limits of knowledge which he cannot pass. Those who know the most of the

world and of themselves are the most cautious in pronouncing dogmatically on what is possible or impossible. It is seen that the Bible and religion have no monopoly of mystery. The increased seriousness of scientific men in their references to religious faith is in pleasing contrast with the flippancy and scorn of sceptics of former days.

Our knowledge of the other great religions of the world is like the discovery of a new continent or a new planet. If it was ever thought that inquiry in this field would depose Christianity from its unique position, the hope or fear has been already disappointed. No mean argument for the supernatural origin of Scripture may be based on comparison with other faiths. The attempt to explain Christianity as the result of natural development or evolution will utterly fail. The result of inquiry so far has been to show that the best which man can do for himself in the search for God is too little. In the works of writers like Müller, Renouf, Rhys Davids, Edwin Arnold, we see Hinduism, the Egyptian religion, and Buddhism at their best; but no one will propose to exchange Christianity for any one of these faiths. Heathenism at its best is to Christianity "as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine."¹

¹ Grant, *The Religions of the World*.

We have also in these days a new science of history. The nature of evidence and the tests of truth are better understood than ever before. Fact and fable, reality and myth, are more easily and more strictly distinguished. Anyone who will compare the new with the old histories of Rome, Greece, England will at once feel the difference. We see the effect on religion in the historical criticism applied to Scripture. It is too soon completely to estimate the final result; some points may be noticed afterwards. We have no hesitation in saying that the criticism to which Christianity is exposed from this quarter is the most searching it has ever met. But there are not wanting signs that if there are losses there are also gains, and that extreme sceptical positions taken at first are being modified.

The following works take account of modern difficulties :—

Beet, *Credentials of the Gospel*.

Bruce, *Apologetics; or, Christianity Defensively Stated*.

Chapman, *Jesus Christ and the Present Age*.

Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*.

Conder, *Basis of Faith*.

Dale, *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*.

Fisher, *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief.*

Flint, *Theism ; Anti-Christian Theories.*

Godet, *Defence of the Christian Faith.*

Mair, *Studies in the Christian Evidences.*

Orr, *Christian View of God and the World.*

Rogers, *The Superhuman Origin of the Bible.*

Row, *Manual of Christian Evidences ; Christian Evidences in relation to Modern Thought.*

——— *The Jesus of the Evangelists.*

Stewart, *Handbook of Christian Evidences.*

Tymms, *The Mystery of God.*

Wace, *The Gospel and its Witnesses.*

II

KIND OF EVIDENCE AND DEGREE OF CERTAINTY TO BE EXPECTED

A CHRISTIAN'S faith, like other faith, is in proportion to the evidence supplied. Christianity does not require us to believe without evidence or in opposition to it. "The works that I do," Christ says, "bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John v. 36, x. 37, 38, xiv. 11). No one does or can believe anything without evidence which he regards as sufficient. Many Christians accept much of their creed on the authority of an infallible Church or teacher; but then their faith in this Church or teacher as infallible rests on evidence which is at least to their own minds satisfactory. No other kind of faith is rational; we may even say, no other is possible, although of course the possibility of mistake must be admitted. The desire for sufficient proof is natural. We sympathise strongly with those who desire to believe in Christian teaching, but think the evidence insufficient.

A right distinction is drawn between merely historical faith in Christ and spiritual faith. The first may exist without the latter; but we make bold to say that the latter cannot exist without the former. It is too much the fashion in our days to maintain the opposite. Because teachers like Luther and Wesley strongly insisted that historical faith in God and Christ and Scripture is not enough for salvation, it is inferred that such faith is of no importance. Influential writers of our day take this ground, and appeal to practical teachers like Luther. What would Luther and Wesley have said of anyone who asserted that he believed in Christ as a Saviour, but did not know whether Christ was divine, or wrought miracles, or rose from the dead? They would certainly have questioned the possibility or reasonableness of such a faith. Granted that merely historical faith does not of itself effect any moral change, for bad men may so believe and remain bad, just as devils may so believe and remain devils, still it is a condition of the higher faith. How can the present living Christ, with whom faith brings me into fellowship, be a reality, if the Christ of the Gospels is a myth? This point will come up again at a later stage.

When it is said that the evidence of Chris-

tianity is insufficient to support its claims, we ask, Is it so? If it is not so, as we contend, how do any come to think so? The explanation may be either that the amount of evidence is underrated, or that the nature of the only evidence possible is misunderstood. We freely grant that the more extraordinary the claim that is made the stronger ought to be the evidence by which it is supported. A miraculous life needs to be attested by evidence of proportionate strength. But we contend that this is the case with Christianity. The following argument will entirely fail unless this position is made good. We may point out here, that the strength of the Christian case consists in the variety and harmony of proof by which it is supported. The numerous independent lines of evidence support each other. Whether it is the Christian position as a whole, or any part of it, the decision does not turn on the testimony of a single witness. Our faith in the existence of God appeals to the witness of nature and conscience, of reason and history. If one of these might be mistaken, or if we might misinterpret the teaching of one, it could not be so of all. Our faith in the supernatural origin of Scripture appeals to internal and external proofs, and these are found in agree-

ment. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is based not on one line of teaching, but on many lines; every one must be explained away, if the doctrine is to be evaded. The resurrection of Christ is established by similar converging proofs. If that is denied, the early faith of the Church on the subject and the success of Christianity cannot be explained. The same is true of every doctrine—the Trinity, the atonement, forgiveness, and holiness. Wherever in matters of daily life different independent witnesses agree, the certainty felt is correspondingly strong. If in a court of justice several independent witnesses bear the same testimony, there is no difficulty in arriving at a decision. It is not often in earthly matters that such confidence is possible. In the majority of cases we have to act on a slight balance of probability. While, then, we allow that in religion we ought to have far stronger grounds of confidence, we maintain that this is actually the case. Dr. Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, one of his most acute works, builds up a powerful argument for the genuineness of the Book of the Acts from the “undesigned coincidences” of that book with the incidental allusions in Paul’s Epistles. The principle may be applied much more widely. The evidence for Chris-

tianity as a whole, and for each one of its constituent parts, is an example of undesigned coincidences. Much of the strength of the Christian faith consists in this element.

The feeling of dissatisfaction referred to may arise in many cases from a secret persuasion that nothing less than absolute certainty is essential in regard to the highest truth, and absolute certainty is out of the question. To Bishop Butler belongs the merit of having clearly shown that no such certainty exists with respect to nine-tenths of our action. In the world of practical life we have to be satisfied with probability, often of a weak degree. Absolute certainty only belongs to the objects of sense, the facts of internal consciousness, the truths of mathematics, and the very small number of general principles which underlie human thought and action. Without entering here into elaborate argument, we may remark that in the practical affairs of life, such as business, education, government, judicial proceedings, social action, we have nothing approaching absolute certainty to go upon; moral certainty is the utmost that we can expect, and even this is attainable only in exceptional cases. It is profoundly true that "probability is the very guide of life." Is it reasonable to accept this

as sufficient in the most important concerns of worldly life, and to refuse to accept it in religion in its best and strongest form? If absolute certainty were the rule in man's ordinary life, we might justly expect it in religion. If what has just now been said is true, we have in religion probability at its highest power, namely, moral certainty. But this is not enough for the sceptic. He must have stronger evidence in religion than that which he acts upon a hundred times every day in other affairs. All that can be reasonably expected is that the grounds of faith supplied in religion shall be the best of their kind. The witnesses should be unexceptionable in point of competence and character, the historical proofs should be numerous and clear, doctrine should be effective and beneficent in practice. If Christianity does not fulfil these conditions, let it stand condemned.

Still moral certainty is not absolute certainty; this is the grievance. What would such certainty mean in religious life? It would compel conviction, leaving no room for freedom and choice; it would make deliberation and earnest search unnecessary; in the highest life of the spirit, in the soul's relation to truth and righteousness, to God and the moral law, it would make man a slave or a machine. No

doubt it would exclude error and sin, but it would exclude the reality and even the possibility of virtue. The demand seems to be for such overwhelming evidence as would leave nothing for the will to do, and would paralyse human effort and struggle. Such a state of things is quite inconsistent with a state of probation, and with the whole position of man in other respects. Faith would cease to be a moral act and to have a moral value.

Why should we expect to be without trials in the life of faith any more than in other matters? In earthly things we recognise that the presence of difficulties, the possibility of mistake and failure, is part of the discipline of life and the training of character. This is the price of true success. Earthly good is offered to acquisition, not to passive acceptance. Religious security and independence are attainable in no other way.

Many readers will recognise that in the foregoing remarks we have reproduced the thought of Butler. So convinced are we that the secret of much of the unbelief of the day lies here that, at the risk of repetition, we still linger on the point. We are not shut up in religion to the meagre evidence with which we have to be content in the other spheres of life. We have more and better proof of the history of Scripture than

of any other. In regard to every great doctrine the certainty is the next in point of strength to the demonstration that is impossible in regard to historical and moral truth. To desire more is to desire what is out of keeping with the rest of life; and those who express the desire are inconsistent in rejecting in one sphere what they accept in another.

However strange it may seem that room should be left for doubt in regard to the highest subjects, this is only in keeping with everything else in man's life. There is enough light for earnest seekers of the truth, but not enough to make seeking and earnestness unnecessary. But this is saying too little; there is not only enough but abundant light. It is easier to mistake in temporal matters than in spiritual. If it were otherwise, we should feel that we were treated hardly if not unjustly. But it is not so. God has done more for man's moral and eternal good than He has done for his earthly interests. He has provided help and guidance here beyond what He has provided in the lower sphere. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God" (John vii. 17).

III

SCOPE OF THE PRESENT INQUIRY

OUR subject is a limited one. We wish to answer two questions : Why do we believe in the genuineness of the Scriptures ? Why do we believe in their divine origin and authority ? One form of unbelief in our days attacks the integrity and credibility of the Scriptures ; another makes them out to be mere products of human thought, the result of a purely natural development. It is evident that these are fundamental questions, lying behind all ideas of inspiration and general Christian doctrine. Unless the books of Scripture are trustworthy and of supernatural authority, all claims of other doctrines on the ground of authority fall to the ground. The doctrine of inspiration may come up for brief notice at the close. The trustworthiness of the Scripture records and their authority as a divine revelation may be held apart from the doctrine of inspiration. Of

course that doctrine gives the strongest guarantee of divine authority, but it is not absolutely necessary to faith in Scripture as a special revelation of God.

One of the strangest facts of our age is the existence of a school (the Ritschlian) which, while not merely discarding miracles and inspiration but admitting the most extreme critical views respecting the books of Scripture, claims to be the true representative of its teaching. By external and internal criticism whole books are got rid of or pronounced doubtful, genuine and spurious passages are said to be everywhere mixed up; apostles, not to speak of Christ Himself, are freely criticised like ordinary authors; and the result is presented to us as Christianity purged of all lower and foreign elements. It does not fall within our province to discuss the final result. Otherwise, we should point out that all the old meanings of the great Christian doctrines are abandoned; the names are retained in quite different senses; morality is made not merely the essence but the whole of Christianity. If methods of treating Scripture are to be tried by their fruits, there can be no doubt what the verdict on the present method must be. But our business is to point out that the position of this school proves the fundamental character

of our present subject. Our view of Scripture determines the contents of our creed. It is impossible to abandon Scripture as a standard of doctrine, and yet retain any fixed and stable system of belief. The old is not necessarily the true, and departure from the old is not necessarily a proof of error. But entire abandonment of old interpretations and beliefs is at least open to serious suspicion. Great as the departure from old paths was at the Reformation, it was far from being an utter breach with the past; and this is asserted by the new school to be the defect of that great movement. Luther and the other Reformers, it is said, differed merely in detail from the old Church. Their essential principles were the same as the old. Their submission to Scripture especially was a cardinal mistake. They dealt only in half measures. Far more drastic ways are necessary, and are taken by the writers in question. It is a completely new reading of Christian terms and ideas that is given us, one that no former Christian generation would have recognised. This is not development, but revolution. We are reminded of the way in which the first Roman emperors disguised their new despotic system of government under the old republican names and forms. The disguise cannot last long. The world will

soon see through the pretence of taking texts from Christ and Paul and John, and preaching the old forms of piety, while denying to Christ and Paul and John any authority higher in kind than that of any Christian teacher. Sooner or later theory and practice will inevitably be brought into harmony. The result of the course taken by this particular school amply justifies our mode of treating the subject.

The view we take of Scripture has just as fundamental a relation to the view we take of Christ. We agree with most that is said in our days about the central, supreme place of Christ in Christian faith. We do not put Him higher than Scripture does. He is the subject and the goal of the ancient Scriptures (Luke xxiv. 27, 44 ; John v. 46 ; Acts viii. 35, x. 43 ; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11). It is truly enough said, Christianity is Christ. Faith in Him brings salvation (Acts xvi. 31). But how do we know Him ? Where do we find the record of His life and teaching ? Where do we get the materials for our conception of Him ? Our only source of knowledge is Scripture. No other source is known to us. We sometimes hear of a Christ above or behind Scripture ; but this is pure imagination. The Christ of the evangelists and apostles is the only one having reality. Language of the kind re-

ferred to reminds us of the attempt to find a Church above or behind Scripture; whereas we can know nothing about a Church, its nature, authority and office, except from Scripture. It is clear that everything which tends to cast uncertainty on Scripture to the same extent casts uncertainty on the figure of Christ. The history of the Gospels must be at least substantially accepted before we can rely on Him as the supreme Teacher and Saviour of mankind. We fear it cannot be said that criticism leaves the historical credibility of the Gospels substantially intact. What is left reminds us of nothing so much as of one of the ruined abbeys and monasteries that dot our land. One critic leaves more than another, but all reduce Scripture, and especially the New Testament, to a ruin. Subtract all that is denied as coming from Christ and the apostles, and the remainder gives us a very different Christ. If the gospels of the critics had been the original ones, it is impossible to understand how the idea of the Christ of the Church arose. What then is meant when we are practically told to build our faith on Christ apart from Scripture, and that it does not matter what becomes of Scripture as long as we keep Christ? How long will faith in Christ last after confidence in Scripture has been destroyed

or shaken? What sort of Christ remains? We might as well undermine the credibility of any ordinary history or biography, and yet profess to be able to preserve our idea of the subject unchanged. In this way again we see that the question of the veracity of Scripture precedes all intelligent faith in the supreme power and authority of Christ.

It may indeed be objected that we stake the entire truth of Christianity on the correctness of the thousand and one details of the Scripture text. But it is not so. The suspicions and denials of critics involve far more than mere details. It is true that there is no agreement among them. But in their extreme forms they would completely destroy the integrity and trustworthiness of the Scripture text. There is the greatest difference between mere details and the wholesale changes that are proposed by extreme critics. Discrepancies and mistakes in secondary details have always been admitted. Modern opponents go very much farther.

The fashionable school, which is most influential in our days and which is represented by writers like Kaftan, Wendt, Herrmann, accepts the conclusions of the higher criticism respecting Scripture. To it the Scriptures are books to be treated as ordinary uninspired writings. Pro-

phets and apostles have no intrinsic authority. Paul and John are as amenable to criticism as modern orthodox teachers. We may accept as much or little of the contents as we please. Scripture is no longer a unity, but a thing of shreds and patches. Everything miraculous, even Christ's resurrection, is a matter of indifference. Now the Christian faith of the past and of the present is built on a very different basis. Apart from differences of opinion on unimportant details, the integrity of Scripture on the whole was earnestly maintained. It is evident that here we have a complete change of ground. The differences are irreconcilable. We are no indiscriminate advocates of the old as such. We do not question the necessity of change as a consequence of increasing knowledge and better methods. But the question is, Can the change amount to complete revolution, to a complete breach with the past? This and nothing else is what is expressly advocated by the writers just mentioned.¹ According to them Christian doctrine from the first took an essentially wrong direction, absorbing the teachings of Greek philosophy instead of being drawn from purely religious sources, and it has continued in that course ever since. The Reformation pursued

¹ Kaftan, *Truth of the Christian Religion*.

the same vicious methods. We may well object, *in limine*, to this proposed reconstruction of the edifice of Christian belief from base to roof. Is it credible that the entire Christian Church in all its thinkers and teachers has gone completely wrong, only and always wrong? If so, what has become of Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit to His followers, of special divine presence and help? It may be said that the whole world went wrong for long centuries as to the system of the physical universe. Quite so. And if this is put as a parallel case, we know exactly where we are. There is no special divine help in the form of inspiration, revelation, or anything else in the case of Christianity. In religion man has been left entirely to his own resources. As matter of fact this is precisely the position of the school of thought in question. Religion is a natural development of human experience; the only factors are the natural ones at work in every other field; there is no such thing as special revelation in any sense. It is evident that the result must be a complete transformation of all Christian doctrine; and this is the case. The names are retained, but simply as empty vessels to be filled with entirely new contents. We maintain that principles which involve such a complete breach with the past have the strongest

possible presumption against them. Let anyone compare the new views about Christ, about sin, about atonement and forgiveness, about prayer and the future life, with the old, and he will see that everything is new but the names employed. We put the matter thus plainly, because the greatness of the gulf between the two sets of doctrines is industriously concealed. The difference is represented as of secondary importance, like that between Romanist and Protestant, Calvinist and Arminian. Those who deny the divine authority of Scripture, the supreme deity of Christ, the Fall, the essential evil of sin, the sacrifice of Christ's death, justification by faith, future judgement, are represented as the true heirs of the thousands who held all these as the essence of Christianity. The root of these differences is the new position taken in regard to Scripture. Hence the importance of maintaining as the first step in the Christian argument the substantial truthfulness of Scripture as a book and the evidence that it is of divine origin.

SECTION I

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT

SECTION I

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

WE wish to know whether our Bible is the original one, the Old Testament the Bible of the Jews, the Old and New together the Bible of the apostles and early Church—in short, that the books we use are those which were used by the Jews and the early Christians. We need to be sure that no books have been added and none omitted. It is easy to ascertain this in relation to the Old Testament, because the Old Testament was completed before the time of Christ and the apostles, and is endorsed by them. We have also the testimony of the eminent Jewish writers, Josephus and Philo, who were contemporary with Christ and the apostles.

Suppose that the writings of Livy, or Cicero, or Seneca, or Marcus Aurelius, or a volume made

up of portions of these, had been received by the Roman people as sacred, as a true account of the history and faith of their fathers, that these writings bore a distinctive name indicating their special character, and that they were referred to and frequently quoted by after writers, would not this be accepted as ample evidence of genuineness, *i.e.* as evidence that these writings were regarded as genuine by the Roman people? This is the position with respect to the Jewish Scriptures. It is needless to say that we have nothing like such proof of the genuineness of the works of ordinary writers like Livy or Cicero or Virgil.

First of all, we have the fact that the Old Testament is often referred to and quoted in the New under the current titles of the Scripture, the Holy Scriptures, the Sacred Writings, the Law, the Law and the Prophets, "the law, the prophets, and the psalms" (Luke xxiii. 44, the Psalms being the chief part of the third class). The order—Law, Prophets, Writings = Holy Writings—indicates the order in which the sections or groups were acknowledged as canonical or authoritative. It is not denied that each one of these groups was closed in their present form before the Christian era. Even if the precise dates were uncertain, this would not matter. There is a general agreement that the Law was completed

in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, 444 B.C.,¹ the canon of the Prophets between 300 and 200 B.C., and the Writings (Hagiographa, Holy Writings) about 100 B.C. There is greater uncertainty about the date when the second and third parts were closed than about the date of the first.² But this is immaterial. The important fact is that the Old Testament, as we now have it, was completed before the Christian era. The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, about 130 B.C., often refers to a collection of books consisting of the law, the prophets, and "other books," suggesting that the first two sections were completed, but not the third. There is no need to prove or defend these statements, because they are not and cannot be questioned. Uncertainty about details, or disputes about one or two books, cannot alter the main position. "The full complement of Scripture had been arrived at a century before the coming of Him who came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets" (Ryle, p. 178).

The number of books was usually reckoned among the Jews as twenty-four, but Josephus says twenty-two, probably in order to conform

¹ Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 101. Ryle, *Canon of Old Testament*, p. 93, says, "About 432 B.C."

² The process is described in Ryle, chs. iv.-viii.; Buhl, *Canon and Text of Old Testament*; and Wildeboer, *Canon of Old Testament*.

to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet ; in the latter computation Ruth was joined to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah. The entire list includes the five books of Moses, the four Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), the four Latter (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Minor Prophets), Writings = Holy Writings (Chronicles, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah).

It seems strange to us to find historians classed as prophets, to find Joshua, etc., put alongside Isaiah and Ezekiel. This can only be understood by enlarging our views of the prophet's office and work in Israel. Even the Latter Prophets are not simple predictors of the future. Their writings consist mainly of declarations of the divine will. And in a similar way the business of the Jewish historian was not simply to relate but to interpret the facts of his nation's past. The placing of Daniel also, not among the prophets, but among the Holy Writings, is remarkable. It seems to us a striking evidence of the truthfulness of those who arranged the canon.¹

¹ Dr. Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 215, ascribes the Book of Daniel to the second century B.C., instead of the sixth, and quotes moderate critics like Delitzsch, Riehm, Strack, Orelli, on the same side. Driver, *Introd.* p. 483.

The same remark applies also to the placing of Chronicles (differently from Kings, etc.) in the third class. This does not look as if Jewish traditionalism had been eager to put everything in the way most favourable to its own case.

We read of a council of Jewish rabbis meeting at a place called Jamnia, south of Jaffa, at the end of the first century A.D., and putting the seal on the entire Old Testament canon; but in the light of what has been already said, this cannot mean that the entire canon was an open question. The chief business probably was the settlement of controversies respecting a few Old Testament books. Dr. Sanday says: "The discussions which seem to have gone on in the rabbinical school at Jamnia imply a completed canon. Or rather we ought perhaps to say a canon completed provisionally but not as yet definitively. For the discussions turn not so much on the question whether certain books ought to be admitted into a collection then being formed, as whether they had been rightly admitted into a collection already existing."¹

It is interesting to notice that the Old Testament canon, like the New, had its "disputed" books. Just as 2 Peter, Jude, James, 2 and 3 John, Hebrews, and Revelation were supported

¹ *Inspiration*, p. 96; Ryle, p. 172; Buhl, p. 24.

by less cogent outward evidence, so it was with Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and Esther. We read of controversy about them before the Synod at Jamnia. We are not surprised at this; for these are just the books which have called forth most doubt and discussion in the Christian Church, and on similar grounds. Their presence in the canon is to many earnest Christians a trial of faith. They are the least used either for proof of doctrine or edification of life, and they are the puzzle of commentators. There were disputes of less importance among the Jews about the books of Proverbs and Ezekiel.¹ This controversy among the Jews at least shows that the gathering together of the books of Scripture did not proceed without inquiry. It was not the work of rabbis exclusively; the entire nation took part in it.

Indeed, the most recent researches make it certain that the Old Testament canon was, like the New at a later date, the growth of a long period. Each of the three sections was closed at a different date. The special character and position ascribed to these books was not the work of a particular class, but expressed the mind of the whole Jewish Church. If the scribes were

¹ Ryle, p. 137; Davison, *Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*.

active, it was only as chroniclers to register and give effect to the belief of the Church. We know as matter of fact that the New Testament grew in this way; no learned class or council collected and shaped its parts. When councils come into view, it is simply as recognising and acting upon existing beliefs. The same is true of the earlier canon. The Church led, scholars followed. A learned and fair-minded writer, Dr. Wildeboer, says: "The course of the history shows us that, while it was Jewish scribes who gave final decision on the extent of the canon, they did not in this altogether follow their own judgment, but in the main merely endorsed what the practice of religious life among the pious of Israel indicated, and practical life could not be altogether regulated by any official decree of synagogue authorities." The same writer sums up thus: "From the standpoint of Christian theology there is no reason why we should not accept in general the canon of the Jews. Not on account of what the scribes chose to give, but on account of what they actually handed down, the Christian Church can take over their canon. In investigating Israel's literary treasures it is our business to see how its religion, which is the root of Christianity, arose and maintained itself against all disturbing forces. Now in the Law

and the Prophets the sources of Israel's religion are opened to us. Here we learn how the testimony of Jehovah by the ministry of His prophets was made known, and was able to maintain its position. In the Hagiographa we plainly see how far Jehovah's purpose could be carried out while the national bond, which held together Israel's great treasure, was unbroken, and what influence the prophetic testimony had on Israel." In other words, the function of the Jewish Church in relation to Scripture was that of a witness, not of a judge, just as in the case of the Christian Church and canon afterwards. It never exercised or claimed any higher power. And its selection of certain books was a rejection of all others. A curious Jewish phrase to describe the sacredness of canonical books was that they defiled the hands. We should speak of sacred books being defiled by irreverent handling; the Jews reversed the order of thought. Apocryphal books did not defile the hands; canonical books did.

Referring to the works already mentioned for further details, we ask whether the facts now stated do not justify the faith of Christians in the genuineness of the Jewish Scriptures. This conclusion is not discredited by reference to Jewish "tradition" in contrast with history.

We distinguish in Jewish records between facts and opinions, and even in the case of reported facts we take into account considerations of probability. In accepting the testimony of Jewish writers to facts we are not committed to all the views of the ancient Jews, even of learned writers like Josephus and Philo, about the nature of inspiration and revelation. But to reject Jewish testimony indiscriminately is just as unreasonable as to accept it indiscriminately. The main facts of the history are "traditional" in the sense in which the stories of the English Commonwealth and the Napoleonic wars are traditional. Dr. Sanday, in his second lecture on "Inspiration," gives plenty of examples of the improbable and legendary in Jewish belief; but anyone can distinguish, if he will, between this element and the substratum of fact which remains after all reasonable deductions.

The question may be asked, Do not the new critical theories about the Old Testament seriously interfere with the results just arrived at? They do not affect the simple question of the genuineness of the Old Testament books as a whole. Whether their conclusions respecting the composition of the books and their dates and authorship are true or false, the fact that the books were canonised at certain dates and

were received by the Jewish people as sacred remains the same.

The bearing of these theories on the divine origin and authority of the Old Testament is not so easily settled. Without attempting to discuss the whole question, we may call attention to one or two points. According to the old order the phrase, "the law and the prophets," represents the order of origin of the sacred books, as indicated in the arrangement of the Old Testament. According to the new order we should say "the prophets and the law," for the prophetic teaching was first in time, and the ceremonial law of Moses so-called represented a degenerate form of faith. Then how came the order to be inverted among the Jews? How did the Jewish "tradition" arise? We do not see how this can have been done otherwise than by deliberate intention. And this is avowed by many advanced writers. We are assured that the true order of development has been quite perverted, and a right view of the history of religion in Israel made impossible by the Jewish "tradition," which was subsequently adopted in the Christian Church. Far be it from us to deny that downward steps in religion are possible; history has witnessed too many. There has been no greater instance of corruption

than is presented by the introduction of the sacerdotal view of the Christian ministry in the early Christian centuries. But here is the difference. The latter was never incorporated in the Christian Scriptures and made part of the teaching of Christ and the apostles. In order to make the two cases parallel we must suppose not only that this was done, but that it was put at the very beginning of the teaching of Christ. According to the new view this great falsification must have taken place in Jewish history and been accepted by the nation. The only motive that is suggested or is conceivable is priestly ambition. The priestly class, in order to secure its supremacy in the nation, claimed Moses himself as its founder and the author of its teaching. Even supposing the success of this plan to be within the bounds of possibility, how is it to be reconciled with the notion of divine inspiration and authority of any kind? What should we say of a similar allegation in regard to the New Testament? Making allowance for progress in moral ideas and different views of literary authorship in former days, can such a course as the one supposed be harmonized with even rudimentary morality, not to speak of divine revelation? Any critical process which involves such issues is certainly open to suspicion.

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the priestly and sacrificial system of the law was a divinely appointed preparation for Christianity. Both as a whole and in detail it is treated as typical of Christian realities. It was only intended to be temporary. Incompleteness was its only fault. No hint of any other kind of censure is given. According to the critical school the entire system was an error and an evil, a falling away from the lofty, spiritual ideal of the prophets. How are these two views to be reconciled? What becomes of the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

The new school undertakes to explain the religion of the Old Testament on the theory of evolution. But not only is the appearance of Mosaism or Judaism after the prophetic period a break in the line, but the appearance of prophetism itself is a still greater anomaly. No preparatory stage is shown. The early religious ideas of Israel are rated exceedingly low. They are put on a level with those of barbarous tribes. Then all at once the "ethical theism" of the prophets shines in mid-heaven. The day begins at noon. The spiritual purity of prophetic teaching approaches Christianity. What were its antecedents? Out of what roots did it grow? The law of development is com-

pletely ignored; the spiritual precedes the natural. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," no longer applies. Are we not here very near the miraculous?

It is evident that the new theory has many explanations to give before it can count on general acceptance. One direction in which it is undergoing modification is in the admission that large indefinite portions of the law, while late in being reduced to regular written form, were of ancient date. Here we have an exceedingly variable factor which may yet serve as a bridge between "traditional" and modern views.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW TESTAMENT

IN the nature of the case we have no witness to the New Testament corresponding to the witness of the Jewish Church in regard to the Old. We see the Christian Church doing for itself the same work which its predecessor had done at an earlier period, marking off its sacred books from all others. What we have to ascertain is whether we have good reason for believing that our present New Testament is the one received by the early apostolic Church. This is not identical with the question whether the books were actually written by the men whose names they bear. If it were correct, as is sometimes said, that we have no means of proving the truth of the traditional authorship, no vital question would be involved. The Epistle to the Hebrews, about the authorship of which opinion has changed, is a case in point. Its genuineness as a part of the original

Christian Scriptures does not depend on authorship. Avoiding needless detail, we wish to state as much evidence as will be sufficient. For particulars larger works may be easily consulted.

We have a fixed starting-point in the New Testament at the close of the second century (180–200 A.D.). It is generally admitted that this was the same as ours. There were certainly seven books about which even then all dispute was not at an end, the so-called antilegomena or disputed books—Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Revelation. Even among these there were degrees of certainty or uncertainty, some being less questioned than others. We may leave these books out of sight for the present and address ourselves to the others which in reality form the heart of the Christian Scriptures. Dr. Westcott says: “All the other books of the New Testament are acknowledged as apostolic and authoritative throughout the Church at the close of the second century.”¹ This “solid nucleus” includes the four Gospels, the Acts, Paul’s Epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John. If any serious change had taken place after apostolic days, any large

¹ *Canon of New Testament*, p. 294. Dr. Sanday says the same *Inspiration*, p. 12.

interpolations, any addition or omission of books, it must have been during the second century. Our references therefore will be to writers of that century in order to see whether any such change was possible.

Our witness for the end of the century is Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons (about 180 to 190 A.D.). The Christian Churches of southern Gaul were exceedingly active even at that early date, and they played a conspicuous part in Church history in later centuries. The country was closely linked with Asia Minor by the use of the Greek language and by commercial relations; and the Churches of the two countries were in close intercourse and sympathy. Irenæus, who succeeded the aged martyr Pothinus, himself came from Asia Minor, where he had heard Polycarp of Smyrna speak of his intercourse with the Apostle John "and the rest who had seen the Lord." From these he received accounts of the Lord's life, teaching, and miracles. If Irenæus's New Testament had differed in any important respect from that of Polycarp, he must have known and would have stated it. His testimony in his great work *Against Heresies* to the four Gospels is explicit. If his comparison of the Gospels to the four zones, the four chief winds, the four faces of the cherubim, is fanciful,

at least it is unmistakable. He also affirms that the heretical sects against which he is writing appeal to the same Gospels, and that each one—Ebionites, Docetæ, Marcionites, Gnostics—can be confuted out of its favourite gospel. Dr. Mair has reckoned up 180 quotations in Irenæus from Matthew's Gospel, 15 from Mark's, 125 from Luke's, 80 from John's.¹ He also quotes by name as Scripture the Acts, 12 Pauline Epistles, 1 and 2 John, Revelation. Irenæus speaks at least for the Churches of southern Gaul.

At the same date two great scholars, Clement (210 A.D.) and Origen (185-254 A.D.), speak to the same effect for the Church of Alexandria. Dr. Mair says of Clement: "He quotes from Matthew, or makes reference to his Gospel, about 180 times; he quotes from Mark above 20 times; from Luke about 110 times; from John above 60 times; from Acts about 20 times; from Romans about 110 times; from 1 Corinthians about 150 times; from 2 Corinthians more than 30 times; and in a similar proportion with regard to all the remaining Epistles, with the exception of the minor Epistles, until we come to Revelation, which he quotes about 12 times." Origen, who is somewhat later, has our

¹ *Studies*, p. 84.

complete canon of the two Testaments, with doubts expressed about 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. Dr. Tregelles, a likeminded man in many respects to the great Origen, says of him : "In his writings he makes such extensive use of the New Testament, that, although a very large number of his works are lost, and many others have come down to us only in defective Latin versions, we can in his extant Greek works alone find cited at least two-thirds of the New Testament."

The fiery Tertullian speaks for the North African Churches (160-221 A.D.). In his treatise against the heretic Marcion he appeals to the Churches founded by the apostles and the doctrines they received from the apostles—the Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Ephesians, Romans. "Not only among the apostolic Churches, but among all the Churches which are united with them in Christian fellowship, that Gospel of Luke which we earnestly defend has been maintained from its first publication. The same authority of the apostolic Churches will uphold the other Gospels which we have in due succession through them and according to their usage, I mean those of Matthew and John; although that which was published by Mark may also be maintained to be

Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was." Tertullian "refers to or quotes from all the books of the New Testament, except Philemon, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John. He quotes from or refers to Matthew about 400 times, Mark about 80 times, Luke about 500 times, John about 240 times, Acts about 110 times, Romans about 160 times, 1 Corinthians about 350 times, 2 Corinthians about 120 times, and so on proportionably through all but the very smallest Epistles, until we come to Revelation, from which he quotes about 80 times."

The Muratorian canon, a list of the New Testament books (about 170 A.D.), bears testimony to all our books except Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 3 John. The Syrian version, called the Peshito, made for the Christian Churches of Syria about the same time, contains all our books except 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation, 2 and 3 John. The old Latin version agreed with the Muratorian canon.

A very interesting witness of this period is the earliest Gospel Harmony, Tatian's *Diatessaron* (about 170 A.D.). This work was mentioned by early writers, but was lost until a quite recent date. The author of *Supernatural Religion* denied that it had ever existed. But quite recently the Commentary on the *Diatessaron* by

Ephraem the Syrian (fourth century) was discovered, and then an Arabic version, made in the eleventh century, of the *Diatessaron* itself.¹ Of course a Harmony would only be made of a book received as authoritative. It consists of a continuous narrative based on the Gospels, Matthew and John being largely used.

These witnesses amply prove that the New Testament of the Church at the close of the second century was substantially the same as ours. It is used and treated as the original document of Christianity. It certainly was not the product of that late age. It will be found equally impossible to fix upon any intermediate period between this date and apostolic days, and show that it there appears as a new work.

We now turn to the first half of the second century. First, Justin Martyr (150 A.D.). His extant works are two Apologies and a Dialogue with the Jew Trypho. His witness is chiefly to the Synoptic Gospels, the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel not supplying much material apt for his purpose. He describes the meetings of Christians on the Lord's day, the reading of "Memoirs of the Apostles or Writings of the Prophets," expo-

¹ Hemphill, *The Diatessaron of Tatian* (Hodder & Stoughton); Hamlyn Hill, *The Earliest Life of Christ* (Clark); Dale, *The Living Christ*, Lect. ix.

sition, prayer, the partaking of bread and wine. His narrative of Christ's life is so full that, if the synoptics were lost, their contents might be restored from his writings.

Several objections are made to Justin's testimony. One relates to his use of the term "Memoirs of the Apostles" instead of Gospels. The latter term, however, does occur once or twice, as where it is said, "In the Gospel it is written that He said, 'All things are delivered unto Me by My Father.'" He speaks of "Memoirs drawn up by the apostles and those who followed them," distinguishing between apostolic and non-apostolic authorship. Inexactness in quotation is objected against him; but his habits of quotation are those of his age. For such reasons it is argued that his "Memoirs" must have been different works from our Gospels. If so, where are they? What has become of them? How came other writings, identical in substance, entirely to supplant them? The change must have taken place between Justin's days and the days of Irenæus. But there is no trace of anything of the kind.

The heretic Marcion flourished about 140 A.D. He used a gospel which, according to early testimony, and especially that of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius, was a mutilated Luke, as well

as ten of Paul's Epistles (Timothy and Titus being left out). To him Paul was the genuine apostle; Paul's connection with the Third Gospel is an early tradition. Marcion's fondness for Paul is explained by the fact that he thought Paul's teaching supported his own hostile attitude to Judaism as the work, not of the true God, but of an inferior being. His rejection of the other New Testament books thus rested on subjective theoretical grounds. This testimony to Luke from such a quarter is so striking that some German writers asserted that Marcion's Luke was the original of our Third Gospel, a position asserted at first by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, but afterwards retracted.

Another witness is Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (120–130 A.D.), fragments of whose writings are preserved by Eusebius of Cæsarea (324 A.D.). His chief work, *Exposition of Oracles of the Lord*, in five books, is lost. We know that he used Matthew and Mark, 1 John, 1 Peter, and Revelation. The silence about the other two Gospels is probably explained by the remark of Eusebius that he would only mention anything of special interest which Papias had said. He tells us how Papias spoke of Mark as writing under Peter's influence, and of Matthew as writing in Hebrew. The last statement re-

presents an opinion widely held in early days. Those who hold it also refer to a translation into Greek. Some words of Papias indicate the means of information existing in early times, and how they were used: "On any occasion when any person came who had been a follower of the elders, I would inquire about the discourses of the elders—what was said by Andrew, or by Peter, or by Philip, or by Thomas or James, or by John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, and what Aristion and the elder John, the disciples of the Lord, say." The present tense "say" should be noted.

The group of writers known as the Apostolic Fathers carries us back within the extreme verge of the apostolic age (70–120 A.D.). It includes Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Barnabas, Hermas; the *Teaching of the Twelve* belongs to the same age. Only one short letter of Polycarp's is extant; yet it contains above forty quotations from or allusions to twelve or fourteen New Testament books. It seems strange that though Polycarp was a disciple of John his letter bears no traces of the Fourth Gospel; still we must remember the brevity of the letter. Peter's First Epistle has impressed Polycarp deeply, as shown by the frequent references to it.

We have the whole of Clement's epistle to the Corinthians. "In this epistle we find many sayings of our Lord which are found in our present Gospels, though Clement does not refer explicitly to the Gospels as his source of quotation. But he distinctly implies, either by quotation or allusion, the existence of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter" (Mair). Of course Clement represents the Church of Rome of that day.

Until recent times we had only a part of the epistle of Barnabas in a Latin version. It contains the words, "As it is written, Many are called, few chosen." Opponents said that this might be inserted by the translator without warrant from the original. But now that two copies of the Greek original have been discovered, it is seen that the words are part of the original. The author of *Supernatural Religion* now says that the words may be taken, not from Matt. xxii. 14, but from 2 Esdras viii. 3: "There be many created, but few shall be saved." The *Teaching of the Twelve* draws its material both from the synoptics and John's Gospel. Generally speaking, as Westcott says, the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers is to the substance of the Gospels; it is not their custom to name and distinguish authors. The Epistles of Jude, 2 and 3

John, 2 Peter are the only Epistles in which Westcott finds "no coincidences of language."

We have gone back from the close of the second century, when our present New Testament was in use, to the close of the first, when we are within easy reach or memory of apostolic days. John and his disciple Polycarp stand at the beginning, Polycarp and his disciple Irenæus at the end. The list of witnesses is tolerably complete, they join hands with each other, their testimony is harmonious. What other book in the world has similar attestation? Suppose a parallel case. At the close of the nineteenth century we are at the distance of a century from the close of John Wesley's life. Some of his works form the standard of doctrine in the community he founded. They have been used and quoted in this character ever since. Would it have been possible at any point of time during this interval to palm off any spurious work as his, or seriously to alter any of these works? It would have been impossible because of the jealous watchfulness of the particular community. We have a similar state of things during the first centuries in the Christian Church in a more intense form. We add this qualification because the importance of Wesley's works to his followers cannot compare with the importance of the New

Testament to the Christian Church. It will no doubt be said that in one case we have to do with a literary and critical age, in the other not. The difference in this respect between the two periods may be easily exaggerated. If writers like Irenæus and Tertullian, Clement and Origen, were not critics, what were they? St. John's First Epistle gives ample evidence of an active spirit of criticism. Despite the unquestionable superiority of our own age in regard to historical knowledge, there is nothing to show that men of those early centuries could not distinguish between true and false, genuine and spurious. Whether the extent of modern progress and enlightenment is exaggerated or not, the literary and critical deficiencies of early ages are often exaggerated.

The genuineness of Paul's four chief Epistles—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians—is admitted on all hands. F. C. Baur says: "There has never been the slightest suspicion of unauthenticity cast upon these four Epistles, and they bear so incontestably the character of Pauline originality, that there is no conceivable ground for the assertion of critical doubts in their case."¹ These four Epistles contain Paul's peculiar course

¹ *Paul, his Life and Works*, vol. ii. p. 110. Strauss, Renan, and the author of *Supernatural Religion* agree with this.

of teaching, "my gospel." The other Epistles, while they confirm and illustrate, add no new element. Those four Epistles, again, become witnesses to the four Gospels as really as the Apostolic Fathers or Justin, and still more valuable because of Paul's greater nearness to Christ's days. There is no need for us to discuss his value as a witness. He had ample means of ascertaining the truth, and he gave abundant proof of his sincerity. It has often been remarked that there is little reference in Paul to the outward facts of the Lord's life, including the miracles. This is just what we should expect in one who was not an eye-witness of that life. Such details would have been suspicious. Any one who will compare the tone of Paul's Epistles with the Gospels will be struck with the difference in this respect. Instead of reciting the facts of Christ's life, Paul assumes them and builds his system of doctrine upon them. He does not regard Christ's death as a historical fact in its historical surroundings. Pilate and Caiaphas are nothing to him; the religious meaning and moral effects of that death are everything. His death is the propitiation for sin, the ground of forgiveness, the demonstration of divine love (Rom. iii. 25, iv. 25, v. 8; 2 Cor. v. 21). His resurrection is a divine witness to

Him as Son of God, a source of Christian confidence, a type and earnest of our resurrection (Rom. i. 4, viii. 34; 1 Cor. xv). Christ is the centre and sun of Paul's entire thought; apart from Him there is no salvation (1 Cor. i. 30, iii. 11, viii. 6; Rom. viii. 32, xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10). The Epistles suppose a knowledge of the Gospel narratives, and would be unintelligible without them. The central position given to Christ in the Pauline scheme of doctrine exactly agrees with the teaching of the Gospels. The account of the institution of the Holy Supper is a remarkable instance of detailed coincidence with the Gospel history (1 Cor. xi. 23 ff.).¹ We need scarcely say that the four Gospels and these four Pauline Epistles together give us the pith of the New Testament.

The Fourth Gospel has long been the object of special attack, the differences in style and tone from the other Gospels being among the chief grounds of objection. We are safe in holding that John merely says explicitly what the three synoptics imply. Without John's Gospel it would be more difficult to prove Christ's divine nature and work, but it would be possible. We cannot discuss this question here. We are only concerned to indicate that the attack is being

¹ Row, *Christian Evidences*, p. 314.

vigorously rolled back. F. C. Baur dated it about 160 A.D.; his disciple Hilgenfeld places it at 130 A.D., the date assigned by other advanced critics. Dr. Weiss, the equal of any of the critics in learning and ability and not inferior in candour, puts it at about 95 A.D. Still, writers of the advanced school agree in making the Fourth Gospel a work of the second century. But they fail to show in it any traces of the influence of that century. We know the century tolerably well—the period of Justin, Marcion, the Clementines, and great Gnostic sects. The Fourth Gospel breathes an altogether different spirit. We might as well assign Baur, Hilgenfeld, Harnack, *Supernatural Religion* to the eighteenth century. It is this difference which has led the latest critic, Dr. Wendt, whose ability and freedom from orthodox bias no one will doubt, to assert for the Fourth Gospel apostolic authorship and, as he asks, If apostolic, why not Johannine?¹ He well says that all the characteristic ideas of the Gospel are quite “foreign to the circle of ideas of post-apostolic times in reference to Jesus and His teaching.” He treats the teaching of Jesus in the synoptics and that in John’s Gospel separately, and thinks that a subsequent editor has supplied a new and often

¹ *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii. p. 404.

inappropriate setting to many of Christ's sayings ; but he strongly maintains the substantial genuineness of the Gospel. His vote weighs heavily against votes on the other side.

It is interesting to notice that the new discoveries of ancient works tell strongly in favour of the Fourth Gospel. Tatian's *Diatessaron* quotes whole chapters of it straight off. The *Clementine Homilies* belong to about 160 A.D. Down to 1853 we had them only in an imperfect form. At that time a complete Greek copy was found. F. C. Baur had said, on the strength of the imperfect copy, that the Homilies knew nothing of the Fourth Gospel. The complete copy contains a free but obvious quotation of John ix. 1-3. Indeed the old imperfect form contained references to John iii. 5, x. 9, 27, which were obvious to any plain reader. The reference is now beyond question, showing that John was known and used like the other Gospels. In 1842 a long-lost work was found at Mount Athos, *The Refutation of all Heresies*, by Hippolytus, who lived at the end of the second century. Dealing with the teaching of the Gnostic leader, Basilides (125 A.D.), he writes : " And this, he (Basilides) says, is that which has been stated in the Gospels : ' He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' " Thus

Basilides, writing about or before 125 A.D., quotes John i. 9, besides speaking of "the Gospels." Respecting the change which has come over the critical school, Dr. Mair says: "According to Baur (died 1860) and his immediate followers, we have less than one-fourth of the New Testament belonging to the first century. According to Hilgenfeld, the present head of Baur's school, we have somewhat less than three-fourths belonging to the first century; while substantially the same thing may be said in regard to Holtzmann. According to Renan, we have distinctly more than three-fourths of the New Testament falling within the first century, and therefore within the apostolic age."¹

Still less than John's Gospel can the synoptics be ascribed to the second century. The contrast here is even more marked. There is nothing in common between the simplicity of the synoptical accounts and the tendency to exaggeration which is so general at the later date. We might just as well assign them to the present century; the contrast, though of another kind, would scarcely be greater. To say nothing of apocryphal gospels and revelations, let anyone compare the letter of Barnabas and the grotesque images of Hermas with the New Testament writings.

¹ *Studies in the Christian Evidences*, p. 153.

Dr. Sanday also points out what a sharp test of time we have in the fall of Jerusalem, 70 A.D. That event digs a deep and broad gulf in Jewish history. On one side the Jewish State and Church are in full strength; on the other both are in utter ruin. Let anyone read passages like Matt. v. 23, 24, xxiii. 16, 17, viii. 4; Luke ii. 22-24, 36-38; Mark xii. 13, 14; Matt. x. 23, and say whether they could have been written after that supreme catastrophe. Could the downfall have taken place and left no impression on the gospel narratives? Note also the warning in Matt. xxiv. 15 ff.; Mark xiii. 14 ff. "All three Gospels lie under the shadow of the fall of Jerusalem . . . In one emphatic passage reported without variation in all three Gospels, it seems to be expressly asserted that the events, not only of the fall of Jerusalem but of the coming of the Son of Man, should take place within the lifetime of the generation to whom they had been predicted. Can we think that these words and others like them would have been left standing if our Gospels had been composed as late as some imagine?"¹

We should further observe that the collection of the New Testament books together and their recognition as sacred Scripture were the spontaneous outgrowth of Church life, not the result

¹ *Inspiration*, p. 293.

of official action. In this respect the process was similar to that in the case of the earlier covenant, as far as the latter is known to us. In what sense then is it true that the Church gave us the Bible? Only in the sense that it was written by special servants of God and members of the Church, and was recognised by the Church as authoritative. But there is no evidence whatever that the writing or the recognition was the result of any set official action. There is no record of any action of this kind on the part of any early Council representing the whole Church. The question of Scripture was settled long before Councils were thought of. All the Councils from Nicaea downwards simply appeal to Scripture. The relation of the Church to Scripture was that of witness and guardian, not judge. We have a similar instance of spontaneous recognition in the case of the English Authorised Version. "Authorised" by whom? No one has ever been able to produce any act of civil or ecclesiastical authority of this kind. The version slowly made its way by its own merits. The same process took place in regard both to the Old and the New Testament canon. The Church by instinct recognised and received God's gift to it. Bishop Westcott's beautiful words in reference to the Authorised Version apply to our

present subject: "It is a growth and not a work. Countless external influences, independent of the actual translators, contributed to mould it; and when it was fashioned the Christian instinct of the nation, touched, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, decided on its authority."

Our purpose does not require us to enter into the authenticity of the other New Testament books. The Second Epistle of Peter is the one supported by the least external testimony. Dr. Sanday, while not committing himself definitely to the negative conclusion, thinks that the balance of argument is unfavourable. He tells us that he once asked Dr. Hort, "the greatest critic whom our Church has produced," what he thought of the Epistle. "He replied that if he were asked he should say that the balance of argument was against the Epistle, and the moment he had done so he should begin to think he might be wrong." Coincidences are pointed out between it and the so-called apocalypse of Peter.¹ Dr. Spitta, a considerable critic, "not at all an apologist, warmly and in detail defends the genuineness of 2 Peter and its priority to Jude."² In early days Revelation often figures among the disputed books. In our days its genuineness is strongly asserted by many negative critics, and is then

¹ *Inspiration*, pp. 346, 382.

² *Ibid.* p. 385.

used as a basis of attack on the Fourth Gospel. There is little likelihood of the attacks on the Acts, the Hebrews,¹ and the Catholic Epistles being successful. The notion that the Acts was a sort of concordat between the Petrine and Pauline sections of the early Church has fallen to pieces. The opposition to the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians) grows feebler. It is certain that if they had been written in the second century, when Gnosticism flourished luxuriantly, they must have borne much clearer traces of this form of heresy. The genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles is still questioned by a large number of critics, but evidence for them is strong. Professor Ramsay, in his *Church in the Roman Empire*, has added considerably to the strength of the affirmative argument. The reader who wishes to see the case clearly and comprehensively put will find ample satisfaction in Mr. Findlay's essay appended to the translation of Sabatier's *St. Paul*.² "It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that nothing really un-Pauline has been proved in any of the disputed Epistles. A development and

¹ This Epistle is unequivocally quoted in the epistle of Clement, 97 A.D.

² Sabatier himself rejects the Epistles as Pauline. Sabatier, *The Apostle Paul* (Hodder & Stoughton).

progress truly there is, but not such as is incompatible with unity of authorship or such as may not well come within the range of a single life.”¹

We think that if anyone will carefully consider the evidence, an outline of which has just been given, he will see that the genuineness of the New Testament is established beyond reasonable doubt. No other book in the world is supported by so much and such good testimony. Our limited purpose does not require us to go beyond this. The question of inspiration will enter at a later stage. It is sufficient for us at present to be satisfied that Scripture is a trustworthy record of what it relates. We do not say that all possibility of question or doubt is excluded. There is no kind of practical knowledge of which this can be said. But the certainty, like the evidence, is of exceptional strength. The weak links in the chain are very few; the strong links will bear a heavier strain than is ever applied to ordinary evidence.

¹ Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 340; see also p. 337.

SECTION II

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

- I. THE WITNESS OF SCRIPTURE TO ITSELF
- II. THE WITNESS OF PROPHECY
- III. THE WITNESS OF CHRIST'S LIFE AND CHARACTER
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SECTION II

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER I

THE WITNESS OF SCRIPTURE TO ITSELF

IN a book purporting to be the work of a well-known writer, we should ask first of all whether the book itself bears witness to the claim in style, mode of treatment, and teaching. Nothing would convince us that a book written in Carlyle's style and full of his characteristic ideas came from Macaulay's pen. So Scripture purports to be from God, and is believed by the Church to be from Him. Is this faith borne out by its spirit, aim, and contents? Are these worthy of man's best ideas of God? Should the answer to these questions be in the negative, all other proof is shut out; the intrinsic improbability would outweigh all evidence from elsewhere we could bring. If the answer is in

the affirmative, the way is prepared for other testimony. Now the two great subjects of Scripture are religion and morality, our relations and duties to God and our relations and duties to our fellow-men. Is the teaching of Scripture such as to bespeak a divine source, such as can only be explained or is best explained by a divine origin? Or can it be sufficiently explained as a product of man's natural powers?

1. *Its Religious Teaching*

First, let us consider the Scripture doctrine of *God*. The touchstone of every religion is its teaching about God. God is the central theme of Scripture. The first verse of Genesis strikes the keynote of the whole book. The subject of the first two chapters is not so much creation as the Creator. In both Testaments God stands in the forefront. Scripture is unique in this respect. Nature and history are treated as revelations of God.

More particularly, what is the conception of God given us? His unity, personality, spirituality, and moral perfection are constantly insisted on. He is set before us as the sole and universal Creator, Ruler, Judge, Father. This in substance is the doctrine even of the

Old Testament. We admit that there is development. New ideas come to light; old ones are more completely unfolded. But throughout nothing is taught at variance with this conception. The latest teaching never contradicts the earlier. It may be thought that such a position cannot be maintained in face of the new critical theories. But really these theories, at least in their less extreme forms, make much less difference than might at first be supposed. Take the essential attributes of unity, spirituality, personality, and even infinity. These are either expressed or implied in the earliest representations on the subject. In the Decalogue idolatry is forbidden, the existence of one God alone is asserted, His invisibility and spirituality are implied (Ex. xx. 1-17). "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no form" (Deut. iv. 12). While the Old Testament does not say explicitly, "God is spirit," there is nothing that contradicts it; all is in harmony with it. "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). Even admitting, for argument's sake, the late date of Deuteronomy, where is there anything in the early history opposed to this teaching? Who will tell us anything which Moses or even Abraham said or did that is inconsistent with

monotheism? On the other side we have plenty of supposition and assertion to the effect that the theory of evolution requires the opposite; but proof there is none. To refer to incidents such as the use of teraphim as proof that monotheistic ideas did not exist is the veriest trifling. We might as well point to relics of Druidical customs and names as evidence that modern England is not Christian but Druidical. The use of such arguments can only be due to the exigencies of theory and prejudice. If the Decalogue does not go back to the days of Moses, it is hard to say what does. Professor Schultz seems to be uncertain on the point. In the end he inclines to assign the form to a later date and the substance to Moses. "The leading ideas," he says, "certainly agree with what Israel was accustomed even in those days (the Mosaic) to regard as Jehovah's will."

The teaching of Scripture then about God from the first was monotheistic and spiritual. Renan implicitly admits this when he tries to explain it by an instinct of the Semitic race.¹

¹ "Better acquaintance with the civilised peoples of Nineveh and Babylon, as well as a proper estimate of the rôle which the Phœnicians played in the history of the world, would directly contradict his assertions" (Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. i. p. 99).

We do not of course mean that an abstract theological monotheism was held, but the substance was there. Renan's explanation is not in harmony with fact. The other Semitic races were grossly and continuously idolatrous. The Semitic instinct of the Israelites was constantly coming out in their lapses into idolatry. It needed stern discipline and much chastisement to keep them tolerably faithful.

There is no need to dwell upon the divine personality. There is no feature of Old Testament teaching more strongly marked than this. The emphatic way in which it is expressed is often made a reproach to Judaism. The God of Scripture is certainly at the farthest remove from being a mere power or tendency making for righteousness. He is everywhere spoken of in the Old Testament as having all the attributes and performing all the acts of spirit. He speaks, hears, feels, loves, hates, blesses, punishes.

But it is especially by His moral attributes that God is known. Here we see the unapproachable superiority of the Scripture conception. We need not quote the lofty language of the prophets and the psalms. Isaiah's vision of God (ch. vi.) is not higher than that of Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6): "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God full

of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth." Or earlier still, take the words of Abraham: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25). To say that Abraham's history is the fiction of a later age is absurd. The style is too natural and simple for this. It is impossible that a later writer, living when knowledge was much fuller, should say what we have just quoted and say no more.

Professor Schultz, who is an unexceptionable witness for our purpose, holds that Moses must have already found in the Jewish nation the basis of his religious and moral teaching, "the belief in a God bound to this people by a special covenant." However dim this belief may have been, it must at least have implied a personal God who had absolute power over nature. Of Abraham he says: "He appears as the priestly servant of the God Jehovah. From the first gracious promises are made to him, and these always become more and more splendid. As the favours increase, so does his faith. Even his son he would be ready to give to God. . . . In a word, he appears as the great 'friend of God' to a degree not attained even by Moses himself."¹ Schultz's opinion is that the creed

¹ Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. i. pp. 89, 94.

of Israel, even before the eighth century B.C., was "practical monotheism," with the qualification that the existence of other gods in other countries was admitted in some sense. "The true representatives of Israel certainly acknowledged, even in these ages, only one God of Israel, only one God whom the people as united to Him by religious bonds ought to worship. However many mythical elements and legendary ingredients may be traceable even in the earliest recollections of the people, the pious among them, so long as they had a distinct religious consciousness, clung closely to the one national God, between whom and the gods of Canaan a sharp distinction was drawn."¹ Anyone who wishes to see the Old Testament idea of God fully presented cannot do better than read the three chapters by the same author dealing with this subject, vol. ii. pp. 100-179. He will see there that the moral elements are supreme. Infinite power and wisdom wait upon perfect righteousness and love.

The complete Scripture idea of God is of course only to be learnt from the Old and New Testaments together. Christ completes the earlier teaching with an authority and perfection peculiarly His own. The conception of God in

¹ Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. i. pp. 177, 180.

the Old Testament would be imperfect without the New; that in the New would be unintelligible without the Old. Christ only abolished the Old by fulfilling it (Matt. v. 17). With nothing but the Old in our hands we should never have discovered the New for ourselves; with the New in our hands we easily discern its prophetic outline in the Old. Many of the discoveries of the divine character in the law and the prophets anticipate much of the teaching of the Gospels and Epistles. It is the same God that we see in both in different degrees of revelation. The harmony is as striking as the progress. The God whom we hear in Christ's words and see in His life is the God of Moses and of the psalmists and prophets.

How is the existence of this idea of God, so profoundly ethical in spirit, so consonant to man's highest thoughts, gradually appearing in many writers in the course of centuries, to be explained save as the work of revelation? If it is of human origin, how is it that nothing like it is found in the other great religions of the world? The science of comparative religion has now made us tolerably familiar with the contents of these systems. All of them without exception are seen to start from the practice of nature-worship, some retaining more

of this character than others to the end of their history. In not one of them is there a clear, firm grasp of the divine unity, spirituality, and infinity, to say nothing of the higher moral perfections. God is never sharply distinguished from nature, and so the foundation of a true doctrine of God is never gained. While there are many fine glimpses of truth, there is no connected, certain, complete view of God. We can admit all that the admiring expounders of these systems claim for them, and yet maintain that they are immeasurably behind the Scriptures on this vital subject. In original Buddhism, as in the religions of China, God is ignored. It is perhaps in Hinduism that the greatest progress was made. Max Müller is very anxious to claim for it an approach at least to monotheism. But the nearest he gets to it on the ground of facts is henotheism, a very different thing. He was obliged to invent the name to denote the highest stage of religious thought in India, namely, the worship for the time of a particular deity as supreme, another deity being similarly worshipped at another time. Where is there any sign of henotheism in the Old Testament, to say nothing of fetishism and animism? The educated thought of India, it is well known, went in the direction of pantheism. Our opinion

of the philosophical power and religious devotion of India is so high, that we are willing to believe that if the world by wisdom could ever have found out the truth about God, it would have been done in that country. What is true of India is true still more emphatically of Egypt, Persia, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. We may see what symbolical meanings we please in the animal - worship of ancient Egypt, but the fact remains that the Egyptians, who were renowned for wisdom in government and war and architecture, adored "birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things" on a colossal scale.

We are more familiar with the life of ancient Greece and Rome. No doubt there is much noble teaching about God to be found in the philosophers and moralists of those classic nations. We are as far as St. Paul from wishing to undervalue the truth they knew. Hardly any praise can be too strong for the teaching of Plato and Aurelius, such as it was. But we cannot forget how imperfect and hesitating their religious beliefs were. Their doctrines were ill-adapted for the general multitude, and were not intended for them. They were as much speculations, counsels of perfection for the select few, as the theories of philosophers of our own

day. The noblest heathen were at best seekers after God.

Immortal Greece, dear land of glorious lays,
Lo, here the "unknown" God of thy unconscious praise!

Equally unique is the Scripture doctrine of *Sin* and its correlative *Redemption*. Sin is too striking a fact, and its effects are too terrible, to be ignored. It has gone near to wrecking the world, as it has wrecked nations and innumerable lives. Whence is it? What is its nature? How can I escape from it? These are inevitable questions; and they receive a sufficient, if not a complete, answer in Scripture. There sin is traced back to the beginnings of the world. It is explained as a rebellion of the human against the divine will, the preference of self before God, of the flesh before the spirit. Given the natural freedom of man and sin becomes possible; and the conversion of possibility into fact is man's own work. Throughout Scripture the guilt of sin is carefully kept away from God, and charged solely upon man. God is eternally and necessarily opposed to evil.

This doctrine of the moral character of sin is as distinctive a feature of the Old Testament as the doctrine of God. The Old Testament is terribly rich in names for the different forms of

evil.¹ "In the last resort every sin is directed against God, the guardian of holy order. . . . The possibility of sin is clearly traced back to the arrangement and will of God. The act of sinning is traced in an equally decided manner to the free will of man. . . . Sin is in its essence a violation of divine order, a transgression of law. To a being morally free, evil as evil can be nothing but a transgression of law." In the New Testament sin is traced to man's inner nature (Matt. xv. 19; John iii. 6). The Scripture account of man's moral condition is often thought to be dark, but it is borne out in every particular by facts past and present. The portrait is perfect. Man recognises himself in the darkest features.

The doctrine of redemption keeps step with that of sin. From the first page of Scripture to the last the history of redemption, including its origin in God's love, its realisation in the world, and its issues in man's character and destiny, is fully described.

The existence of sin is recognised in other religious systems, as we might expect. Here and there we find touching confessions of guilt, enough to show us how universal and deep is

¹ Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. ii. p. 282; Orr, *Christian View of God*, p. 200.

the consciousness of sin, although not approaching the fifty-first Psalm in tenderness of contrition. Especially is this true of the sacred books of India. But there is no clear account of the nature and consequences of sin, much less of the way of deliverance from it. The patient is sick to death, and does not know what is the matter with him, and has no one to tell him.

Modern speculators have succeeded no better in solving the mystery than ancient inquirers. Pessimism goes to the farthest extreme in acknowledging the presence and power of evil in the world. According to it cure is impossible, the existence of the world and man is a mistake, happiness is unknown. But even pessimism is nearer the truth than pantheism and materialism, which make sin a necessary part of the world's life, and deny its essential evil. According to both theories, all human action is the result of an iron law of necessity, and could not be other than it is; man's belief that he is free is an illusion. Those who hold these doctrines do not carry them out in practical life. Despite their creed, they act as if they were free; the inference therefore is that they are so. All the arguments against free agency and in favour of necessity are wrecked on the simple consciousness which everyone has of responsibility and moral desert.

All society, business, education, government, act on the supposition that men are free. We need not ask whether on this subject Scripture on the one hand, or pantheism and materialism on the other, is truest to human nature.

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false, I find.
I, still to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught original sin,
The corruption of man's heart.¹

Another central doctrine of Scripture is *Immortality*, just as essential to religion as the ideas of God and redemption. We cannot conceive religion without it. This is one answer we give to those who fail to find the doctrine in the Old Testament. Like the idea of God, it is not asserted or proved, but assumed. The longing for immortality is as natural to man and as indestructible as the longing for God. With the exception of Buddhism and the Chinese religions, all the great religions include it in some form. In ancient Egypt it overshadowed everything else. We know the wistful reasonings of Plato, reasonings which, with all their beauty, yielded no certain conviction. The unseen world did not surrender its secret to human reason. It needed

¹ R. Browning.

a divine hand to lift the veil. Dr. Schultz is one of those who rate the amount of Old Testament teaching on the subject very low.¹ He strangely thinks that popular belief among the Jews was in advance of religious thought. The meaning of certain psalms is reduced to the lowest point. Job xix. 25 is treated in the same way. Dr. Orr's account is much more just to the Old Testament.² He shows by continuous exposition that the Hebrew hope referred, not to the immortality of the soul merely, but of the whole man. This is the distinctive doctrine of Scripture. The body receives due honour. The tendency of ancient philosophy was to regard the body as something extraneous to human nature, not an integral part of man—a burden and prison, rather than a sharer in man's fall and redemption. So far, Dr. Orr holds, from the thought of resurrection from the dead being due to Persian influence, it is "one of the very oldest doctrines in the Bible, the form, in fact, in which the hope of immortality was held, so far as it was held, from the days of the patriarchs downwards." Abraham's trial and sacrifice are connected with faith in the possibility of a resurrection (Heb. xi. 17–19). Dr. Davidson, in

¹ *Old Testament Theology*, vol. ii. p. 321 ff.

² *Christian View of God*, p. 234.

his *Commentary on Job*, says: "The doctrine of immortality in the Book of Job is the same as that of other parts of the Old Testament. Immortality is the corollary of religion. If there be religion—that is, if God be—there is immortality, not of the soul, but of the whole personal being of man (Ps. xvi. 9). The teaching of the whole Old Testament is expressed by our Lord with a surprising incisiveness in two sentences: 'I am the *God* of Abraham. God is not the God of the dead, but of the *living*.'" ¹

The Christian doctrine of immortality then is just the filling up of man's innate conviction and hope. It is the immortality of the whole man, not of a part, and it is a sure and certain hope. Christ's resurrection put the seal on the certainty. His resurrection did enough if it put beyond doubt this great hope of the human heart.

A general feature of Scripture religion is its intense inwardness. From the first the divine law lays its command on the heart, on disposition and motive. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. vi. 5). "Thou shalt not covet" (Ex. xx. 17). While outward rites and forms are enjoined, they are only means and helps. We need not quote the abundant teaching of

¹ *Commentary on Job*, p. 295.

prophets and psalmists to this effect. With one voice all say: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. xv. 22). "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. vi. 8). In this respect the Old Testament anticipates the New in general outline. The formal side of the earlier faith is often exaggerated. What could the New Testament say more than the psalmist, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit"? (li. 17). Of course this characteristic is perfected in the New Testament. Spirituality of religious requirement cannot be carried farther than it is here. They sin deeply against the genius of the gospel who unduly magnify the outward and visible forms of religious life. The Sermon on the Mount is the only proof we need refer to.

Another equally conspicuous feature is the union of religion with morality. They are never found apart. Half of the Decalogue deals with our duties to God, half with our duties to man. The two are related as root and fruit. They are always regarded as inseparable. There is no more frequent subject of stern condemnation in the prophets than religious profession without right conduct (Isa. i. 11-17, lviii. 5-7). The teaching of St. John is emphatic on this subject:

“He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen” (1 John iv. 20). There is no greater distinction between false religions and true than is supplied by this test.

We have only been able to refer to some of the chief elements of religion, but we have said enough to evince the uniqueness of the religion of Scripture. Does not unique character imply unique origin? If the religion of Scripture had been from the same source as other religions, must it not have run on the same lines? How is it that the other great religions of the world are so similar to each other and so different from Christianity?

2. *Its Moral Teaching*

The morality even of the Old Testament is noble. The Decalogue is its sufficient monument. That moral teaching undergoes great development. Its highest forms are found in the psalms and the prophets. But even in the earlier stages it breathes the finest spirit. Thus in Lev. xix. 34 the Israelite is commanded to love the stranger as himself. “Hence in many respects the morality of the Old Testament is a near approach to that of Christianity; and in

fact it is to such passages from the law that both Jesus and His disciples are specially fond of attaching their exhortations. The kindness, humanity, and tenderness shown alike to the children of Israel and to the strangers sojourning among them, and the conception of morality as the necessary expression of the frame of mind which results from piety, remind us of the New Testament.”¹ It might seem at first sight from the Sermon on the Mount as if the old law required only goodness of act; but this would be a misunderstanding. The close of the Decalogue shows that much more was required. The great difference between the Jewish and the Christian law is that in the latter good disposition is more emphatically made the essential element.

While there is much ceremonialism in the Old Testament; this is never accepted in lieu of morality. The prophetic teaching is very earnest on this point. In such passages as Isa. i. 10–17, Mic. vi. 6–8, the prophets are not condemning religious forms in themselves, but only their abuse by nominal religionists, by religious professors whom we should call antinomians. Prophet and priest are no more enemies under the law than Peter and Paul under the gospel. The

¹ Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. ii. p. 61.

entire aim of the ancient law is described in Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

A special feature of Old Testament morality is that it is put under religious sanctions. "Thus saith the Lord." "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The motive appealed to is both duty and gratitude. The distinction we make between duties to God and man is foreign to the Old Testament, and indeed to all Scripture. Sin against man is sin against God also. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. li. 4). David's sin had been against man, but the divine relation for him overwhelms the human. The motive to obedience is thus put in the strongest form, namely, that of obligation to a person, and that the highest in the universe. In human relations the strongest motive is that of love to a person, to parent or friend or benefactor. A mere abstract sense of duty will not bear comparison with a personal motive like this. And throughout Scripture morality in its entire extent is put on this basis. God is made the source of the moral law. Both His authority and His goodness forbid evil and claim obedience. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" in the Old Testament is answered by, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" in the New. Thus the motive

is not interest or expediency or reward, but right, and right in the most effective form. "If ye love Me" is an appeal which goes to every Christian heart. All that Christ has done for us, all the force of redemption, is behind it.

The insuperable difficulty of all schemes of philosophical morals is to get the idea of moral obligation. Expediency or utility in its most refined form is not obligation. To convince me that honesty and truth, justice and mercy, are my interest and for the general good, is not to convince me that I ought, that it is right, that I shall be guilty if I refuse. The sense of obligation is altogether independent of consequences. But even the conviction that the sense of right is innate in human nature is far less powerful than the sense of duty founded on personal relations and benefits; and it is this last motive that is used in Scripture from first to last.

The vast superiority of Old Testament morals is best seen in comparison with other religions; and it is fairer to other religions to compare them with the Old Testament than with Christianity. Directly the comparison is made, especially in regard to the religious motive, we feel that the things compared are in different worlds. There is no need to disparage the ethics of other religions — Chinese, Buddhist, Persian, Egyptian.

We gladly acknowledge their high merit, and allow all that can be fairly claimed for them. In Confucianism, with all its wonderful shrewdness and wisdom, we are dealing simply with personal and public interests, appeals to reasons of policy and advantage. The religious motive is quite absent. Buddhism stands higher. The milder virtues — humanity, kindness, compassion — are inculcated in maxim and story. We are reminded of the Stoicism of the West in some respects, although the Eastern sage is the gentler spirit. Reverence, lowliness, contentment, gratitude, meekness, patience, self-restraint, purity are highly praised. There are multitudes of sentiments like the following: “One may conquer myriads of men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor.” “As long as the sin bears no fruit, the fool thinks it honey; but when the sin ripens, then indeed he goes down into sorrow.” “Like a beautiful flower full of colour without scent, the fine words of him who does not act accordingly are fruitless. Like a beautiful flower full of colour and scent, the fine words of him who acts accordingly are full of fruit.” “He who holds back rising anger as a rolling chariot, him indeed I call a driver; others only hold the reins.” “Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good, let him conquer

the stingy by a gift, the liar by truth.”¹ Here is the ideal Buddhist. How many are the actual Buddhists? If there were no other defect, the theory suffers through lack of motive power. There is no divine sanction. The theory speaks, indeed, of the need of redemption, whatever the meaning given to the word, but it is self-redemption. Man has to make his way from sin to righteousness, from bondage to freedom, from misery to bliss, by his own effort. No divine love or grace comes to his help. Of Buddhist ethics as a whole a competent and impartial judge writes: “Though it is quite true that Buddhist morality has many beautiful sides, owing to the seriousness with which personal salvation is regarded, as well as to the teaching of virtue, which is preached in word and example, yet it also has its dark side in the low value set on virtue, on all social conditions, and all practical morality. A necessary result of this is the absence of all positive sense of duty, a contempt of work, of women, and all conditions of a life on earth. The object is not to take one’s place in the world, but to fly from it. This negative morality so entirely forms the essence of Buddhism that it is inconsistent to think, with Ed. von Hartmann, that this peculiarity can be done away with, and

¹ Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 126.

that we may expect from the Buddhism of the future any real assistance in the positive aims of mankind.”¹ This is a very different judgement from that of Max Müller and Sir E. Arnold, who leave little difference between Buddhism and Christianity, but it is much nearer the mark.

Christian morality is the Old Testament morality perfected. Christ fulfilled the law by extending its range and throwing all the stress on disposition and motive. The greatest tribute to the old is that the new is the old transformed and glorified. The moral teaching of Christ and the apostles is everywhere based on the old. The difference is vast, but it is simply in degree. The chief difference is in the central place given to the gentler virtues, such as humility, patience, kindness, mercy. “Love your enemies.” “Overcome evil with good.” “Love is the fulfilment of the law.” “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.”² Read the parable of the Good Samaritan, Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. xiii., John’s in his First Epistle. By this line of teaching morality was revolutionised, because love to others, instead of justice to others,

¹ De la Saussaye, *Science of Religion*, p. 606. The Buddhist counterpart to the Jewish Decalogue is : Kill no living thing, steal not, commit not adultery, lie not, drink no strong drink.

² Matt. v. 44 ; Rom. xii. 21, xiii. 10 ; John xiii. 34.

was made the standard of judgement. How immensely the standard was elevated is obvious.

We are so familiar with this teaching that its high originality escapes us. There are many ways in which this may be illustrated. While the doctrinal teaching of the New Testament has been amply developed, the moral teaching has never been so developed. Ethics remains far behind doctrine in this respect. Whatever the cause, the ethical literature of the Church is poor beside the theological. This remains a task for the future.

It is just as certain that the practice of Christian nations, and in a less degree of the Church itself, lags far behind the teaching of Christ. Where is the nation whose policy is regulated by the Sermon on the Mount? Christians have been afraid to apply Christ's teaching in practice. Christ changed the basis of moral life, but Christians have remained on the old one. Heathen ideals largely govern thought and action still. If it were not so, could war fill the place it does in the life of Christian peoples? There can be no more conclusive proof of the greatness of Christ's moral teaching than the fact that after all these centuries it remains so far in advance of the practice of His own followers. Canon Row well says: "There can be no doubt that if, during the

last three thousand years, the milder virtues had occupied the place which the heroical ones have held in men's estimation, the happiness of mankind would have increased a thousandfold."¹ Mr. Lecky writes that the Christian ideal has "done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."

It is no less significant that modern atheists denounce the Christian ideal, and advocate a return to the heathen one. They quarrel with the very principle of Christian morals, and think it was an evil day for the world when the self-regarding were supplanted by the self-denying virtues. We do not care to criticise the critics. There is so great need of virtue of every kind that if they will only realise their own ideal, we will so far rejoice. The worst thing is that there is no sign of this. Those who abandon and decry Christian virtues adopt, not the heathen virtues, but the heathen vices.

Compare Christianity with the noblest ethics of antiquity. The four cardinal virtues of Greek moralists were courage, justice, prudence, wisdom—great virtues certainly, which have never been lacking in the Christian world. But it is evident that they tend rather to self-assertion than to self-

¹ *Bampton Lectures* for 1877, p. 158.

sacrifice. We may exhibit them all without the spirit of mercy and love. They easily pass into self-sufficiency, pride, and arrogance. The ancient ideal of morals was admirably embodied in the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who has many fervent admirers in modern days.¹ He was the saint of Stoicism, the flower of the life of the ancient world. If anything in antiquity could have arrested the decay that had set in, it would have been lives like his. But he was alone. His ideal was too cold, too austere to attract others. We admire his consistency, his simplicity, his stern self-discipline, his unrelaxing devotion to duty, but we are not drawn to follow him. Precepts such as those which abound in his *Thoughts*, however noble, would go but a little way towards renewing society. "The best way of avenging thyself is not to become like the wrong-doer." "My nature is rational and social; and my city and country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome; but so far as I am a man, it is the world. The things, then, which are useful to those cities are alone useful to me."²

Comparing, then, the moral teaching of Scripture with the best elsewhere, we ask, How is it that there is this difference in comprehensiveness,

¹ See Essays by Farrar, M. Arnold, F. W. H. Myers.

² Long, *Thoughts of M. Aurelius*.

in simplicity, adaptation to human nature and needs, practical effectiveness? All the other systems, however different in detail, have a close family likeness. Scripture strikes out a new path. Its moral teaching is as unique as its religious. How could this be, if it came from the same source as other systems? There can be no doubt that if it had been like the rest it would have shared the same fate. A difference so deep and far-reaching argues an equally great difference in origin.¹

¹ For a full and able exposition of these arguments, see Mr. Chapman's Fernley Lecture on *Jesus Christ and the Present Age*.

CHAPTER II

THE WITNESS OF PROPHECY

EVERY careful reader is impressed with the unity of Scripture, and this impression is deepened on closer acquaintance. Scripture taken as a whole is a unity, but a unity made up of parts like human nature and the human body and the visible universe. We have just as much right to describe Scripture as an organism as we have so to describe human nature or the body or the universe. In the one case as in the others there is a goal reached by preparatory stages, a definite end accomplished by means. The goal of the New Testament is more or less in view from the first chapter of Genesis. This feature was early referred to in Augustine's favourite saying: "The New Testament is hidden in the Old, the Old is disclosed in the New." Paley's illustration of the watch is just as applicable to Scripture as to creation.

The unity of Scripture is the more remarkable

when we remember that it is made up, first, of two parts separated from each other by several centuries, and, secondly, in each part of books of different authorship and date. It is futile to say that the unity is explained by the selection from an extensive literature of works following each other in natural sequence. Why has not this been done in other cases? Because it could not be done, because there is no other instance of a religious literature exhibiting an orderly development from rudimentary beginnings to a complete whole through so long a course of time. No such book as Scripture has been or can be found in any other nation of ancient or modern days, in East or West. The Hindu Vedas are not such a literature. At their beginning we have nature-worship, at the close pantheism. The Koran is the work of one period and one man.

There is a wonderful unity of faith in Scripture. Abraham and Paul would have understood each other. They stand in the same line. Indeed, Paul clearly asserts his identity of faith with the great patriarch (Rom. iv., Gal. iii.). The two dispensations form a harmonious whole; each is the complement of the other, neither is intelligible without the other.

There is also in Scripture a national unity, the ground of which is religion. The history of

Israel is a unique one, the history of a people with a unique mission. There is a certain analogy between it and other nations in that religion fills the place which law and government did in Rome, philosophy and art in Greece. But, as we shall see presently, in prophecy this mission found conscious expression. The story of creation and of the beginnings of the race is merely introductory to the history of the chosen people. If Abraham was the founder, Moses was the organiser of the nation. These two names are stamped deeply on its entire life. The separate tribal existence merges in the powerful monarchy of David and Solomon. The kingdom divides; the greater part vanishes in captivity, the smaller but more influential part returns from captivity to hold a purer faith. The nation falls successively under the power of Persia, Egypt, Syria, Rome, and is at last destroyed. But, strange to say, the history is continued in another sphere. A world-wide spiritual kingdom takes the place of the limited temporal one. The Christian Church is the designed, predicted successor of the earlier system. There is a certain resemblance in this to the way in which at a later date the Holy Roman Empire succeeded to old imperial Rome, with the immense difference that in the latter case one earthly order suc-

ceeded another, whereas in the other case the mixed earthly and spiritual order is followed by one purely spiritual. There is no other history of the same kind.

The unity of plan and purpose is seen especially in the prophetic element, which runs as a connecting thread through Scripture. There is a certain kind of prophecy in nature. The seed is a prediction, a designed prediction, of the plant and fruit; spring, a prediction of harvest, youth of maturity. In every national history the later stages are latent in the earlier ones, and omniscience reads the former in the latter. But the highest form of prophecy is found in Scripture. The difference between ordinary and sacred history is that, while in the former we can look back and see how events have followed each other in natural order, in the latter those who lived in the earlier stages were enabled to see with different degrees of clearness the future issues of things. And the only explanation of prophecy is the divine prescience and working.

The most striking part, again, of Scripture prophecy is the series of predictions clustering round the person and work of the Messiah. Gradually the idea of a kingdom of heaven or of God is unfolded with increasing clearness, until at last we see it set up in the person of Christ.

The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets (1 Pet. i. 11). Christ Himself appeals to the fulfilment of prophecy in Himself (John v. 46 ; Luke xxiv. 27, 44). The evangelists and apostles often appeal to the same evidence. For the purpose of bringing out the unity of prophecy we will review the course of Messianic prophecy, taking Dr. Orelli's *Old Testament Prophecy* as a guide.

The first in the series is the promise made to the first parents of the race (Gen. iii. 14, 15), often spoken of as the protevangelium (first gospel). It is a little gospel, a gospel in miniature, obscure until read in the light of the fulfilment, but still dimly outlining the future conflict of good and evil and the victory of the good. It is a far distance from this first promise to Luke ii. 11 ; still one is the starting-point, the other the goal. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent are the two opposing forces ; the former suffers lightly, the other is crushed. Nothing is said about the course and varying fortunes of the conflict, but the result is foretold. The woman's seed is a significant idea. "This was to find its consummation in one person—the Son of Man, so called because in Him the idea of man is perfectly realised. By Him, who always victoriously trod the tempter under foot, the decisive victory has been won (1 John iii.

8; Heb. ii. 14 f.; Col. ii. 15), not without the victor being wounded by the serpent's bite, *i.e.* experiencing in fullest measure the death that is the bitterest import of the curse which is the fruit of sin. It is a noteworthy coincidence that the serpent-conqueror was in special sense the *woman's* seed, born of woman, without being the offspring of a man. . . . Thus the outlines of the divine plan of salvation glimmer through the veil of the first oracle. That oracle establishes not only all men's need of redemption, but also their capacity for redemption."

The promise to the patriarch Abraham is the first gospel enlarged (Gen. xii. 1-3, etc.). Here the seed of the woman is narrowed to the seed of Abraham, while the universality of the blessing is emphasised. "Abraham rejoiced to see My day" (John viii. 56). "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv. 22). Christ's own ministry was limited to the house of Israel (Matt. xv. 24). In the apostolic ministry the order was the Jew first, then the Gentile. The opening of the Church to the Gentile world was the fulfilment of the patriarchal promise.

The greatest of the prophets, Moses, foretells the appearance of a greater than himself (Deut. xviii. 15). The superiority indeed is not mentioned, but only the likeness. This prophecy

first individualised Jewish expectation: "Art thou the prophet?" (John i. 21, vii. 40). Christ says: "Moses wrote of Me" (John v. 46). "Beginning from Moses . . . He interpreted to them . . . the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). "The Lord was fully justified in describing Himself as the Fulfiller of the saying of Moses, because in Him the revelation announced by Moses culminated; and the apostles had the more reason to appeal to the passage, because many were startled by the appearance of their Master being more of a prophetic than of a kingly hero." Balaam's mysterious prophecies also are found in the Mosaic record (Num. xxii., xxiv.).

It was from David's days that Messianic prophecy took the kingly form which it retained ever afterwards, and which became so prominent in Jewish thought. The Davidic stamp is so strong that the Messiah is afterwards called by the name of Israel's favourite King. As the Messiah was to be the greater Moses, so He was to be the greater David, the ideal, spiritual King (Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, xxxvii. 24; Jer. xxx. 9; Hos. iii. 5). The kingly character is to the front in most of the Messianic Psalms (Pss. ii., xlv.; 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7). As to the authorship of Ps. cx. (see Matt. xxii. 43), Dr. Orelli thinks

it is not by David but about David. The poet may have been Nathan, or some other seer of the age who was "struck with the divine greatness of the new kingdom in Zion."¹ The language goes far beyond anything witnessed in David's days. "Either we have here an enthusiastic idealisation dealing in hyperboles and above criticism, or David's greatness and dignity had in God's sight a significance that went far beyond its empirical form. The latter supposition alone is worthy of a prophetic oracle." "The fulfilment of this psalm in its highest significance was claimed by Jesus (Matt. xxii. 41-46; Mark xii. 35-37; Luke xx. 41-44). And certainly as those expressions were inspired by the Spirit of God, they first found their fulfilment in David's perfect Son. . . . Expressly citing the words of this psalm, the Epistle of the Hebrews asserts the super-angelic majesty of the Son of God (i. 13) and the eternal high priest (v. 6, vii. 17, 21, viii. 1, x. 12 f.). If de Wette, Hupfeld, *et al.*, think that the king who crushes heads and fills the lands with corpses cannot be the Christian Messiah, Christ Himself and His apostles judged otherwise. In the wondrous prophetic picture they saw the divine-human head of God's kingdom on earth. And this with

¹ *Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 155.

good reason. The image goes far beyond the facts of the old covenant, glorifying its brightest forms with loftier splendour." The second psalm sets forth the Messiah as the Son of God and universal conqueror. The conflicts and triumphs of the Messiah-king are here plainly enough foretold. "One alone could call Himself in the deepest and fullest sense the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. xvi. 16), a dignity raising Him, as Heb. i. 5 asserts, above the angels." The passion-psalms deserve special study (Pss. xxii., xl., lxix.). Dr. Orelli's exposition is admirable in every respect.¹

The prophets of the *pre-Assyrian* age are Obadiah and Joel. The day of the Lord is the key-word of their message (Obad. 15, 21; Joel ii. 28 f., 30 f., 32). Zion is described as Jehovah's special dwelling-place. Joel's prophecies were fulfilled in the universal outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts ii. 16) and the judgments on Jerusalem afterwards. "A few decades after the shower of the Spirit had shaken the disciples' home at Jerusalem, the city burst into flames; not perfume of sacrifice but vapour of smoke rose from the temple to heaven; fire and blood strove together. The doom of annihilation, foretold by the possessors of Christ's spirit and

¹ *Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 172-184.

announced by many fearful signs in heaven and on earth, was come."

The *Northern* prophets of the *Assyrian* period are Amos, Hosea, and Zechariah ix.-xi. Amos and Hosea are the Baptist and the beloved John of the prophets, one stern and fearless, the other yearning with pity. Delitzsch calls Hosea "the *minnesinger* among the prophets." Zech. ix. 9, 10 is a glorious picture of the Messiah-king. The ass symbolises His gentle spirit and peaceful rule. Instead of kindling war, He will banish it. The chariot and bow will be destroyed; He will declare universal and perpetual peace (Matt. xxi. 4, 5; John xii. 14-16).

The *Southern* prophets of the same period are Isaiah, Micah, Nahum. The chief Isaiah-prophecies coming up here are ii. 2-4 describing Zion exalted, the Immanuel prediction of vii. 14, 15, the Messianic King (ix. 2-7), the Branch and Shoot (xi. 1-9). What an expansion of vision! How far we have travelled from the promise in Eden! These predictions are among the most magnificent of the series. Of the first one Dr. Orelli says: "This prophecy belongs to the most glorious treasures in the world of human thought. Really it contains what human thought held and still holds impossible, but what is certain truth to God's seer. What

supernatural confidence was necessary, in the very age when God's true servants were compelled to announce ruthless judgment on the temple, and it seemed as if everything ever said of God's kingdom in Israel was a beautiful dream lacking confirmation, to promise such a position in the world to this very temple! What anointing of the Spirit it bespeaks when at the very time that all nations were whetting their swords to make God's people feel their edge, the seers of God proclaimed to these very heathen that they will one day grow weary of this sanguinary game and flock to Zion to obtain light and right!"

In the Immanuel-prediction there is a present as well as a future fulfilment. Within the period measured by a human conception and birth, a complete change will take place in the state of the world; the temporal fulfilment came in the invasion and capture of Damascus and Samaria by the Assyrians (722 B.C.). When the boy reaches years of discretion, Judah is laid waste. The ancient Jews in Immanuel saw Hezekiah, but the chronology is wrong. The name given to the boy is a sign of divine help. In the future fulfilment Dr. Orelli finds the virgin in the "elect Church, from whose midst the Messiah proceeds. The prophet discerns in

its present affliction the birth-pangs which will not be unfruitful, like those of the house of Israel (Hos. xiii. 13), but from which the Messiah will proceed." "There is something mysterious in the appellation of the mother of Messiah. Whether it is the house of David, or Zion, or the community of the good, or Judah, in any case she is a virgin; she is not here called the Lord's wife, as in Hosea, but a virgin as one who was destined to be a mother, but had not yet fulfilled this destiny." But this does not preclude the personal reference. Matt. i. 22 f. is right; "for the oracle implies that the Messiah will come into the world through a new miraculous influence of the Lord on the Church; and just the same is shown in the fulfilment in relation to His mother."

In ch. ix. we see a splendid kingdom of peace grow up amid warlike confusion and tumult. The great titles given to the son born expound the previous Immanuel—Wonderful, Counsellor, Father for ever, Prince of Peace. There is nothing to prove that the prophet expected to see the kingdom set up in his own day. No doubt there are points of connection with the present. But the scale is too large, the colours are too glowing for the prophet's days alone. "Not the time, but the fact, was

immovably certain to the prophet in regard to the coming of the divine rule on earth through the perfect Davidite."

According to Micah, the Son of David is to spring from David's town of Bethlehem (v. 2). As to time, "His goings forth are from the foretime, from days immemorial." "For," says Hofmann, "since He is the goal of the history of mankind, of Israel, of David's house, all advances in that history are beginnings of His coming, goings forth of the second son of Jesse." See Matt. ii. 6. "He shall be peace" is the finale.

The prophets of the *Chaldean* period are Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Zechariah xii.-xiv. The most striking prediction of this section is Jeremiah's of the new covenant (xxiii. 5, xxxi. 31, xxxii. 39) and the righteous Branch or Shoot (xxiii. 5). The former depicts the spirituality of the Messianic days as may be seen from the application in Heb. viii. 10. The visible ark of the covenant will be forgotten, and instead all Jerusalem will become Jehovah's throne or mercy-seat (iii. 16, 17).

In the righteous Branch (xxiii. 5, 6) the personal character of the Messiah begins to appear, He who is afterwards known as the Servant of the Lord. Here He is called "The Lord our Righteousness." "Perhaps we may

say that this name contains the New Testament evangel *in nuce*. The new covenant will be a state of righteousness in the Church, its salvation a fruit of its right relation to God, and this relation will have its root in the Lord Himself, being constituted and guaranteed by Him."

In Jer. xxxi. 31-34 the very heart of the gospel is reached. In Messiah's days the covenant shall be no longer outside the good but written on their minds and hearts; God's law shall be identified with their nature. There is no higher idea of religion than this, and no truer description of Christianity. "So long as the law stands over against man as something foreign and outward, he will never keep it as he ought. The human will must be brought into such unison with the divine that it does what is well-pleasing to God of its own natural impulse. Then first the relation is brought about which the old covenant strove after with inadequate means: God is theirs, and they are His." Zechariah's prophecies ch. xii.-xiv. are of the same spiritual nature (xii. 9-11, xiii. 1, xiv. 20 f.). The last one pictures a state of universal holiness when the commonest things shall be as sacred as temple vessels.

Ezekiel and Isaiah xl.-lxvi. are classed to-

gether as prophets of the *exile*. In them the glory of the prophetic order culminates. In Ezek. xxxiv. 23 a personal Messiah is seen as "my servant David." Ch. xxxvi. 25 rivals Jeremiah in intense spirituality. "Here the prophet, who has been accused of superficial externalism, displays insight of extraordinary depth,—such insight as puts him on a level with Jeremiah as a true evangelist in the old covenant." The vision of ch. xxxvii. pictures the future salvation as the gift of new overflowing life, and in the closing temple-vision (ch. xlvii.) the temple-fountain reminds us of Rev. xxii. 1, 2. In the great evangelical prophet the figure of the Servant of the Lord holds us entranced from first to last (Isa. xl.—lxvi). His divine call, His gentle ways, His fidelity, His passion and triumph are set forth with unapproachable grandeur. Prophecy here attains its utmost clearness. Prophecy is at its height.¹

The *post-exilic* prophets are Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Daniel. Haggai's charge to rebuild the temple (ii. 5–9), Zechariah's visions and prophecy of the Servant, the Branch (iii. 8, vi. 12, 13), Malachi's prophecy of the Messenger of the

¹ See the exposition in Orelli's *Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 376–418.

Lord, the new Elijah (iii. 1, iv. 5, 6), and Daniel's visions of the empires, close the prophetic roll. "The last prophet of the old covenant joins hands with the forerunner of the new."

This sketch, however bare, of the course and contents of Messianic prediction is enough to illustrate its extent and significance. We have to do here not with isolated utterances, which might perhaps be explained away as mere coincidences or lucky guesses, but with a connected system which stands or falls together. This feature is seen still more clearly when compared with the oracles of the ancient world.¹ Without disparaging the element of prophecy or divination in those oracles, we may say that their fragmentary and ambiguous character forms a complete contrast to Hebrew prophecy. Unity, design, purpose are just as conspicuously present in the latter case as they are absent in the former. These features are as evident in the scheme of prophecy as in the physical world, and can only be explained in the same way.

The Old Testament claims to be prophetic, and submits its claim to the test of history. Just as certainly the New Testament claims to be the

¹ See Essay on "Greek Oracles," by F. W. H. Myers, in *Classical Essays*.

designed fulfilment. This can be as little disputed as the claim to the possession of miraculous powers. The one claim and the other are woven into the very text of the New Testament. In the Gospels especially, but in the other books also, events are represented as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. St. Matthew's Gospel is full of such representations (i. 22, ii. 5, iii. 3, etc.; see also Luke xxiv. 27, 44; Acts ii. 31, viii. 32-35, xviii. 28, xxvi. 22). The argument cannot be got rid of by the statement that these references are only in the way of allusion or illustration, that there was no designed connection between the prophecy and the fulfilment. The cases are too numerous and pervasive for this. If it were so, the New Testament would be utterly misleading, its statements on this subject would be misrepresentations. The New Testament is thoroughly committed to the reality of prophecy and its fulfilment.

Verbal prophecy is not the only kind. There is what may be called real prophecy as well. Men, institutions, religious rites were intentionally typical of future things. The entire argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews proceeds on this assumption. Priest, temple, covenant, sacrifice in the Old Testament required anti-

types in the New, and according to the Epistle they found them. The credit of the Epistle is linked with the reality of designed correspondence between the old and the new dispensations, not merely in single details, but taken in their entirety. Whether the correspondence is of a kind that can only be explained by foresight and design, anyone can judge for himself.

We confidently ask where a second phenomenon of the same kind is to be found? There is none. Prophecy is one of the many unique facts of Scripture. How is it to be accounted for except as the work of God? It is one of the many signs of the divine presence. Just as the countless adaptations and correspondences in nature demonstrate a divine author of nature, so the wonderful adaptations and correspondences in Scripture prophecy and fulfilment demonstrate a divine author of Scripture.¹

¹ See *Books of the Prophets in their Historical Succession*, Rev. G. G. Findlay, B.A., 3 vols. (C. H. Kelly).

CHAPTER III

THE WITNESS OF CHRIST'S LIFE AND CHARACTER

OUR position is that the character of Christ presented in the Gospels is itself a miracle, the greatest miracle of Scripture, and that if all the other miracles were got rid of, that character would still be inexplicable on natural principles. In order to see the force of this argument, we must consider the circumstances in which Christ's life and character arose.

The character is not described in words by any of the evangelists or apostles. It is contained in His own words and acts, just as in the masterpieces of fiction the character is revealed in the course of the story. None of the greatest masters of fiction has perfectly succeeded in this course. They are obliged from time to time to help out their story by interpretations of their own. But the measure of their success is the test of their greatness. Now in the Gospels the writers themselves

do not speak. They let the life speak for itself.

A still more striking feature is the unity of the portrait, despite variety of representation. There are four accounts, each with characteristics of its own, each presenting a different aspect of the subject; and yet the four, when brought together, make one portrait. The differences of the accounts are obvious. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and still more John, have peculiarities of their own. The discourses and miracles of Christ in the four Gospels are made up of different elements and are arranged in different ways. The differences between the three Synoptic Gospels and the fourth are especially striking, but they are often exaggerated. It is true that Christ's teaching and miracles given in the latter Gospel are peculiar to it; but it is a great mistake to say that the first three give us only a natural, human Christ, and the fourth only a supernatural, divine one, with nothing in common; and that if we had only one account we should know nothing of the side presented in the other. In the Synoptical Gospels, which are said to describe only a human Christ, there are as bold assertions of divine claims as anything in John. Witness such passages as Matt. xi. 27, the office of universal Judge (vii. 23, xxv. 31-46), the

power of forgiveness (ix. 6). On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel is full of touching evidences of His perfect humanity, such as the scenes at the well of Sychar, beside the grave of Lazarus, and above all at the cross.

Another remarkable feature is the blending of the divine and the human in the narrative. Even those who deny the divine for themselves admit that the evangelists and the early Church believed it. We might perhaps conceive the possibility of either of these two elements being imagined alone. But the fictitious construction of a life that should do justice to both, that should exhibit them in the closest and most subtle union at every point, would be a task to baffle the most daring genius. It is a conception that has never been attempted in the world of fiction. Yet the evangelists have succeeded in the task. It is a divine-human life that looks out on us from the pages. One who is both God and man would speak and act as Jesus Christ does.

In respect to His moral character the same union of contrasted qualities fills us with astonishment. In the greatest human lives some one quality or set of qualities overshadows the rest. Great strength in one direction is balanced by equal weakness in another. It is a common and true saying, that a strong character

has the defects of its qualities; bright lights cast deep shadows. In Christ we see strength and gentleness, courage and meekness, holiness and love, at their highest. The Christ who stills the storm blesses the little children. In Him widest extremes meet, "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." He is the ideal man. It is a remarkable saying of J. S. Mill: "It would not be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." Lecky writes: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting in all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exerted so deep an influence, that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."

The sinlessness of Christ, everywhere implied

or affirmed in Scripture, has also to be taken into account. In the whole account of Christ's life there is no trace of the sense of moral imperfection, of sin or the need of forgiveness. This universal characteristic of humanity, which is most conspicuous in the best natures, is altogether wanting in Christ. He prays for His disciples, but not with them. He does not join in the "Our Father." Not only so, but we see in Him the ever-present consciousness of standing in perfect relations with the Father. He always is what others become, the perfect Son. The contrast with lives like those of Paul, Augustine, St. Francis, Luther, Wesley, and all other great saints, is remarkable. If there had been in Him the consciousness of moral defect, it must have found expression in some word or act. We shall search the Gospels in vain for any such expression. We know the belief of the apostles and early Church on the subject. It is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners" (iv. 15, vii. 26). Paul says: "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. v. 21). Peter testifies: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. ii. 22). It has also been well remarked that Christ's claim

to be the Judge of mankind is inconsistent with the consciousness of sin.

The facts just stated prove incontestably the reality of Christ's life as related in the Gospels. The story of such a life is credible only on the supposition that it is a transcript from the fact. Even if the story were the work of one writer, it would be inconceivable as a work of fiction, and still more so if several writers had a hand in it. The unity and sublimity of the picture are unintelligible on this ground. No one can seriously believe that the astounding genius necessary for such a result belonged to the evangelists. Rousseau may well say: "It would be more inconceivable that several men should have united to fabricate that book, than that a single person should have furnished the subject of it. Jewish authors would never have invented either that style or that morality; and the gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, so utterly inimitable, that the inventor of it would be more astonishing than the hero."¹

Still less is it conceivable that the Gospels are the result of subsequent interpolations. On this view unknown authors of later date succeeded by revising touches and chance additions in providing a work marked by the most wonderful

¹ Mair, *Studies*, p. 378.

unity and greatness. This is to make chance and fortuitous atoms do the work of intelligence and genius. While it is true that the highest art lies in concealing itself, there is no other instance of this being done so perfectly under such conditions. The theory is akin to the one that makes the universe with its wonderful adaptations and harmonies the result of the movements of blind atoms.

Our position is confirmed also by the unlikeness between Christ's teaching and life on the one hand and contemporary Judaism on the other. Much research has been expended in our day in exploring the state of religious belief among the Jews in the days of Christ, just as there is much curiosity respecting the religious ideas and practices of the nations contemporary with the Jews of the Old Testament. Whether the motive has been the hope of discovering the sources of prophetic teaching in the one case and of Christ's teaching in the other, we do not know. In any case no such sources have been found. The result has been to bring out contrast instead of likeness. By no process of natural evolution can Christ's teaching be developed out of the ideas of contemporary or antecedent Judaism. Christ was not a greater Rabbi. The more we learn of the contents of the Jewish

literature of those days, the more clearly we see that we are at the beginning of a new era. Jewish Books of Jubilees and Books of Enoch stand at a far lower level than even the post-apostolic writings, which again are far below the fresh inspiration of the Gospels and Epistles. Any history of New Testament times, such as Schürer's, will supply ample materials for illustrating the contrast.

Our contention is that we are here in presence of a moral miracle. Christ's character can never be explained as the effect of natural causes. Otherwise why is it unique? Why is there no second Christ, not to speak of many? How is it that no other life comes within measurable distance of this one? It is true that the fact of sinlessness does not alone prove divinity. The ideal man is still merely man; and this is the position in relation to Christ of influential teachers in modern days, such as Schleiermacher, who was the maker of modern German theology, and Dr. Wendt, who represents the new Ritschlian school. Writers of this class fully admit all that has been said of the absolute perfection of Christ's life and teaching. No language of praise on this subject can be too strong for them. Some, indeed, would not admit that we have here a moral miracle, much less do

they admit the presence of true divinity in Christ. Yet their account of the moral greatness of Christ is much the same as ours. We are even to obtain salvation, to become God's children, through Him, *i.e.* through His teaching and example. How they can believe so much, and yet believe no more, how they can hold Christ's absolute goodness and the absolute truth of His teaching, and yet refuse to acknowledge His divinity, is a mystery to ordinary people. We think they must sooner or later believe more or less. At present they accept a unique effect without a unique cause. The only reasonable explanation of the miracle of Christ's life and character is His divine person.

Of course this question is brought to a quick issue if Christ really taught His own divinity, and if the apostles, who must have known His mind, taught it also. This is not the place to enter fully into the subject. The strongest part of the evidence is that which is drawn from Christ's entire attitude and bearing. If He makes claims on man's faith and obedience which no mere man could make, if He promises forgiveness and eternal life on condition of faith in Himself, if He declares that He is the only way by which man comes to God, and if His disciples, who must have known His mind, confirm all this,

the question is settled for all who believe in Him as a perfect man and true teacher. That this is the case there is abundant evidence to show, and the vast majority of the Church have always firmly believed. The strength of the evidence may be estimated by the amount of skill and violence necessary in expositors of the modern school to get rid of its force. Take, for instance, the claim to pre-existence in John viii. 58. We are told that this does not mean that Christ existed as a person before Abraham, but only that He so existed in the divine design. Who without a theory to prove can suppose that this was Christ's meaning, or that He wished to be so understood? Why should He trouble to assert what is common to Himself with all mankind? In this case He was playing with the Jews and with words; and yet this is the ideal man and teacher!

There is a class of able writers in our days who combine high admiration of the moral excellence of Christ with the denial of anything supernatural in His life and person; we refer to writers like Dr. Abbott, Keim, Renan, and Strauss. It is wonderful what attraction the subject has for them. They cannot let it alone, because it will not let them alone. Strauss gave to the world his conception of the life of Christ in a work which made an immense sensation in

its day. Renan made the explanation of the history of which Christ's life forms the central part the chief task of his life. Keim's *Life of Christ* fills six volumes, and is a monument of learning and ability.

The following are some of the answers given by this school to the question, What think ye of Christ? Strauss: "In all those natures which were not purified until they had gone through struggles and violent disruption (think only of a Paul, an Augustine, and a Luther), the shadowy colours of this exist for ever; and something harsh, severe, and gloomy clings to them all their lives; but of this no trace is found in Jesus. He appears as a beautiful nature from the first, which had only to develop itself out of itself, to become more clearly conscious of itself, ever firmer in itself, but not to change and begin a new life." Keim: "The question as to the religious personality of Jesus leads us into the mysterious. . . . In a dry and barren age, a full and abundant life; among fallen ruins, a construction; among broken natures, one upright and strong; among souls empty of God and God-abandoned, a son of God; among the sad and despairing, a joyous, hopeful, generous personality; among slaves, a freeman; among sinners, a holy one; in this contradiction to the facts of the age, in this

colossal elevation above the depressed, flat, low level of the century, in this transmutation of stagnancy, retrogression, and fatal disease into progress, health, the power and colour of eternal youth; finally, in this eminent distinction of His activity, purity, and nearness to God, He makes for new and endless centuries which through Him have conquered stagnancy and retrogression, the impression of mysterious loneliness, superhuman miracle, divine creation." Renan: "In the front rank of the great family of the true sons of God we must place Jesus. Jesus has no visions; God does not speak to Him from without; God is in Him; He feels Himself with God, and He draws from His own heart what He says about His Father. . . . He believes Himself in direct relation with God; He believes Himself the Son of God. The highest consciousness of God which has existed in the bosom of humanity was that of Jesus." J. P. Richter "Jesus, the purest among the mighty, the mightiest among the pure, with His pierced hands lifted empires off their hinges, turned the stream of the centuries out of its channel, and still commands the ages. . . . Only one spirit of surpassing power of heart stands alone, like the universe, by the side of God. For there stepped once upon the earth a unique being, who merely

by the omnipotence of holiness subdued strange ages and founded an eternity peculiarly His own." ¹ Similar language might be quoted from Theodore Parker, W. R. Greg, J. S. Mill.

These writers, then, admit the presence of extraordinary goodness in Christ. How do they explain it? As they deny any miraculous cause, they can only put it down to genius. We are told that Christ was the greatest religious genius of the world. To assign genius as a cause is simply to say that the cause is unknown to us. For example, to say that the works of Plato, Aristotle, Milton, Shakespeare, Newton are due to genius, is merely to say that they are due to the possession of mental powers far transcending the ordinary; but saying this is no explanation, it is merely repeating the fact and saying that we know of no cause. How did these men acquire such extraordinary powers? And to call Christ a great religious genius is to confess that we can no more explain Him from the world about Him than we can so explain a great poetical or scientific or philosophical genius. It is to give up the hope of finding the antecedents of Christ in His nation and age. It should be remembered also that the phenomenon to be explained here is not the teaching of

¹ Mair, p. 374.

Christ, but His moral character ; how He came to possess the transcendent moral goodness and influence acknowledged in the above extracts. Unless we are mistaken, it is quite a new thing to explain moral character by genius. However this may be, genius is no explanation.

There is another difficulty in the way of this supposed explanation. Christ's moral character is unique, even by the admission of Renan, Strauss, Greg, Parker, and the rest. Shakespeare is not alone as a dramatical genius, nor Milton as a poetical one, nor Cæsar as a military one, nor Aristotle as a philosophical one. Each intellectual sphere has a fair number of great representatives. But in the sphere of moral and religious excellences Christ stands alone. There are several Shakespeares and Miltons and Platos ; there is only one Christ. No one will now bring Socrates and Buddha into comparison with Him. This is the fact which the rationalistic school fails to explain. They want the effect of miracle without miracle. The most reasonable among them, such as Keim, say in effect that while Christ did not rise from the dead, the effect was the same as if He had risen. The disciples believed that He rose, and that was enough. Dr. Bruce very justly says : " Always when writers of this school come to deal with a hard problem,

such as the miracles of Jesus, or the assertion of a peculiar relation to God, or His resurrection, they lose themselves in long involved sentences charged with mystic poetical phraseology, from which it is impossible to extract any distinct idea." Even such events as the resurrection are either slurred over or are described in utterly ambiguous, meaningless language. Dr. Bruce says again: "My verdict is that Strauss was right when he affirmed, that on the principles of naturalism you cannot make Christ an exceptional unique person, but must be content to regard Him, as Renan has done, as a very remarkable man, and to recognise Him as the originator of spiritual religion, just as you recognise Socrates as the originator of philosophy, and Aristotle of science, that is, on the understanding that many attempts preceded these masters, and that since their time many improvements have been made, and may yet be made, but still without impeaching the eminent position conceded to these great original founders."¹ The suggested parallel with Socrates and similar men has just been dealt with.

The writers referred to, while they agree in rejecting everything miraculous, differ from each other in particulars. Keim does not admit

¹ *Humiliation of Christ*, p. 210.

Christ's sinlessness. Renan seriously impeaches His moral integrity in supposing that He adapted His teaching to the low expectations of His followers. Because they expected miracles, He professed to work them. His character thus underwent serious deterioration in the course of His life. And yet Renan lavishes fulsome eulogy on Christ! Most of these writers are hampered, not only by their prejudice against miracle, but also by their theory that God is incarnated only in the human race as a whole, not in an individual; in other words, they are more or less pronounced pantheists. This line of thought underlies the teaching of Schleiermacher, Strauss, Renan, and others.¹

The uniqueness of Christ's character may be further seen in its influence on the character of men. We are thinking not of its indirect but of its direct influence as the spring and pattern of holiness in countless lives. Many lives of heroic virtue have been avowedly inspired by and moulded on that one life. To all Christians the imitation of Christ has ever been the method and measure of moral excellence. Holiness is not merely doing what Christ commands, but being what He is, being like Him. He says:

¹ For more on the subject see the works of Christlieb, *Modern Doubt*, and Bruce, *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Believers are "foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. viii. 29). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (xiii. 14). The best Christians—the Pauls, the Francises, the Wesleys, the General Gordons—have been the first in self-sacrifice, and they have been the likeliest Christ. In this respect Christianity differs from other systems. The best Mohammedan or Buddhist or Confucian is rather he who follows the precepts than copies the life of his great leader; imitation is no essential part of his duty. But it is the very soul of the Christian life, applying to rich and poor, high and lowly alike. To every Christian God's law is embodied in Christ's life. Every Christian also believes that he is under special obligation to follow Christ, and that he is united with Him in a peculiar way. Hence the conception of the Christian life by Thomas à Kempis as an *imitatio Christi*.¹ Christ is thus at once the highest pattern of saintliness and the strongest motive to it that the world has ever seen. No other great teacher or moralist comes within measurable distance of Him in this respect. He is in the highest conceivable

¹ So Dr. Stalker's *Imago Christi*, where Christ is studied in different relations of life.

degree a power making for righteousness among men.

Our conclusion is that, if a miracle is something incapable of explanation by natural causes, Christ's character as exhibited in the Gospels is a miracle. Every other explanation has failed. If He were merely an extraordinary genius, why is there not at least a second? How is it that He is the only ideal man; that He towers above the rest of mankind the King of saints, that He realises in His person the perfect law of God, that He answers to our highest conception of the moral character of God? "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Here is the greatest miracle of Christianity, and therefore the strongest evidence of its truth.

CHAPTER IV

THE WITNESS OF HISTORY

STRESS is justly laid in these days on the influence of Christianity on society and human life in general. If it has transformed the social life of the world, this is no mean argument for its divine power. We take into account both the extent and the character of the change effected. A tree is known by its fruits, is our rule of judgement. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit." We have to show that the change which Christianity (or Christ, or Scripture) has effected in society in destroying gigantic evils, in purifying and elevating morals, in promoting the spirit of kindness and mercy, amounts to a miracle of the most impressive kind.

Canon Row in his various defensive works has justly emphasised the reality of moral in contrast with physical miracles. A physical miracle is an event in the physical world which cannot be

explained as the result of finite physical force, and a moral miracle is an event in the moral world which cannot be explained as the result of finite moral force. In both spheres law reigns. By this time in the world's history we know fairly well what the limits are of the finite forces at work. Whatever goes beyond these is miracle. "As an event manifesting purpose for which the action of the forces of the material universe is unable to account, is a physical miracle, and proves the presence of a power different from those forces, so an event in the moral and spiritual world, for which the forces that operate in man are unable to account, must be a moral miracle, and must prove the presence of a super-human power."¹ The principle is undoubtedly a sound one. If Christ and Scripture are divine, this must be evident in the work they have done in the world. If no extraordinary effects had followed, if Christ's teaching had made little or no change in the world's life, unbelief would have eagerly appealed to the fact; and if extraordinary effects have followed, the fact must have its weight.

Two remarks may be made on Canon Row's argument on these lines. Much that he says seems to be directed against the evidential character of the miracles of the Gospels, but

¹ Row, *Bampton Lecture*, p. 91.

this is more in appearance than in reality. For he himself afterwards appeals to these miracles, especially the cardinal one of Christ's resurrection. The difference in his statement of the case relates to the order in which the arguments should be put. Instead of placing the gospel miracles and the resurrection first, he would place them last and the present argument first. The advantage in this course is that he first of all appeals to a miracle of the present of which we can judge, and then argues from this to the truth of the miracles of the past. Christianity is no longer as dependent as she once was on the miracles of her first days. She has had time to unfold her nature and power, and the result is seen in a transformed world.

On the other hand, the argument in its new form is not as simple and direct as its author seems to think. Considerable intelligence and power of judgement are necessary in order to its full appreciation. For the intelligent and thoughtful it will have great weight, but not for others. It may also be objected that other powers besides Christianity have had a share in the advance of society, although perhaps it would be found in examination that these other powers have been largely helped by Christianity. Evidently the argument is somewhat complicated and is better

adapted to confirm than to create belief.¹ Still, after all deductions, the argument is a powerful one, going to show that the influence of Christianity is unique in kind and degree and is still growing. Let us note instances of the change that has come over the world.

Any picture of the ancient world as Christianity found it must give a conspicuous place to *slavery*. Slavery was universal in the old world, civilised as well as barbarous. It was regarded as right and necessary. Ancient society, even in Greece and Rome, was founded upon it. Aristotle said : "It is evident that some persons are slaves, and others freemen, by the appointment of nature." For the former "slavery is both advantageous and just." Plato's chief concern is that no Greek shall be a slave. This approval and legalising of slavery are far more terrible than the many evils the institution brought with it. The public conscience saw nothing wrong in it; religion did not condemn it.² The slaves were absolutely at the master's disposal. They had no rights of marriage, society, or religion. Once a Roman

¹ Bruce, *Miraculous Element*, p. 295.

² "The gangrene of a slave-proletariat gnawed at the vitals of all the states of antiquity." "It is very possible that, compared with the sufferings of the Roman slaves, the sum of all negro-suffering is but a drop" (Mommsen). See Chapman, *Jesus Christ and the Present Age*, p. 95.

slave killed his master, who had promised him freedom and then broken his promise. According to custom, all his fellow-slaves to the number of 600 were put to death by order of the senate, no doubt from regard to public safety. A Roman noble put a slave to death merely to gratify a guest who had never seen a man die. Another fed his fish with fragments of his mutilated slaves. The numbers of slaves, especially in the large cities, must have been enormous, as all trade and agriculture and not a little of the literature were in their hands. A proposal that the slaves in Rome should wear a distinctive dress was given up, lest they should learn their numbers. The effect on morals of the existence of such a class was frightful.

War was regarded in the same light and practised on the same scale. Wholesale slaughter of the vanquished was a common thing. The Roman Empire was built on the principle that might gives right. Cæsar's Gallic wars, which sprang simply from lust of conquest, probably caused more misery and bloodshed than any other single series of wars known to history,—a consequence of the ruthless way in which war was carried on in the good old days, which some moderns wish to return.

If the character of a people is well seen in its spontaneous amusements, we may judge of

the Roman people by the licentious and cruel sports of the *amphitheatre*, where tens of thousands of spectators at a time feasted on fights of wild beasts, gladiators, and scenes of gross licentiousness. While admiring the vastness and strength of the Colosseum and its numerous copies throughout the empire, we must not forget the cruel use to which these wonderful structures were put. Every occasion of public rejoicing was celebrated by such exhibitions, which grew more and more extravagant. Slaves and captives by hundreds were made to butcher each other to make a Roman's holiday, while nobles and populace gloated on their dying agonies. Trajan's gladiatorial shows lasted 123 days, and consumed 10,000 lives. Even women fought in the arena. Ingenuity was racked to devise new forms of atrocity.¹ The depravity of the times is depicted by Juvenal, Suetonius, Tacitus,—all unexceptionable witnesses. "Lust hard by hate." The details are indescribable. Some traces are to be seen in the apostolic epistles.² Of the days of the emperors Tacitus says: "Virtue was a sentence of death." Lecky speaks of Suetonius as "an eternal witness of the abysses of depravity, the hideous and intolerable cruelty, the hitherto un-

¹ Storrs, *Divine Origin of Christianity*, p. 258.

² "Such were some of you" (1 Cor. vi. 11).

imagined extravagances of nameless lust, that were then manifested on the Palatine." Renan says that "in Rome every vice flaunted itself with revolting cynicism," although comparative purity survived longer in the provinces. Matthew Arnold writes:

On that hard pagan world, disgust
And secret loathing fell;
Deep weariness, and sated lust,
Made human life a hell!

The ancient usage which placed wife and children in the absolute power of the husband and father was deeply imbedded in Roman law and sentiment. At no point in her life was woman in her own power. We read of one Roman lady, the wife of Aulus Plautius, first conqueror of Britain, being arraigned before her husband and the assembled relatives as guilty of a "foreign superstition," probably Christianity. Through all the Roman and Greek writers there runs a stream of depreciation respecting the character and position of woman. The final outcome was a terrible freedom of divorce. "Women made use of this even more than men. Seneca speaks of daily divorces and of illustrious women who reckon their years by the number of their husbands."¹ The moral condition of

¹ Bruce, *Gesta Christi*, p. 23.

German women in those times was far better, although they were equally in the husband's power.

Exposure of infants, especially girls, was common, due often to indifference and often to poverty. Many Roman writers allude to the custom—Seneca, Plautus, Quintilian, Ovid. “No thought whatever of the sacredness of childhood, of the debt due to it from the State, appears in the Roman philosophy or law” (Storrs). Gibbon writes: “The exposition of children was the prevailing and stubborn vice of antiquity; it was sometimes prescribed, often permitted, almost always practised with impunity, by the nations who never entertained the Roman ideas of paternal power; and the dramatic poets, who appeal to the human heart, represent with indifference a popular custom which was palliated by the motives of economy and compassion.”

It should be remarked that there was not one of these evils which the Stoics did not condemn; but we cannot see that the protest had any effect. Moral corruption advanced rapidly, despite all that Seneca and Aurelius wrote. Indeed, the Stoical school seems to have been as practically powerless as it was morally noble. It was an aristocratic party, with no following among the people and no influence over them. In a word, it lacked motive power.

The New Testament did not explicitly condemn these old customs and usages. Its method was to use moral principles, such as the divine Fatherhood, the brotherhood of man, the dignity of human nature, the value of the individual, the essential and universal obligation of right, as seed or leaven, that is, to trust to the inherent power of truth to make its own way; and the result has justified the method. Directly that Christianity became established in the empire, it began to humanise legislation and public life. All through the early centuries and the Middle Ages the Christian Church was fighting, for the most part with the spiritual weapons appropriate to it, against these evils, and slowly victory was won. Full particulars of the struggle will be found in the two excellent works already mentioned, Bruce's *Gesta Christi* and Storrs' *Divine Origin of Christianity*.

Objections may be raised on the ground of the wars of Christian nations, the practice of slavery in the same nations, the vice and misery to be found among them. All these must be admitted as facts. The war-spirit especially clings tenaciously to its old haunts. The other evils have been effectually disposed of. But every Christian must be ashamed of the continuance of the passion for war even in Christian countries. Still

a great deal has been accomplished in this matter. The spirit is limited instead of being universal as it once was. Sentiment against it is powerful and growing. Its horrors have been greatly mitigated even within the last few decades. Who but Christians have ever been foremost in opposing and denouncing it, the Quakers leading the protest with splendid consistency? Their peace-doctrine may be an ideal, but it is the ideal of the Sermon on the Mount. The doctrine preached in some quarters, by some journalists and even by writers like De Quincey, of the elevating influence of war on national character is heathenish and detestable.

As to the moral evils to be found in Christian countries, there is something to be said of the difference in amount and heinousness. While admitting that the mass of vice is terrible, it is, we had almost said infinitely, less terrible than in heathen antiquity. Then it was all but universal. This cannot be said now. Whatever cynics may say, no modern Juvenal or Tacitus could write of Christendom what the ancient Juvenal and Tacitus wrote of Roman civilisation. If the amount of vice and crime in London and New York is terrible, it is equalled, perhaps exceeded, by the amount of goodness. And this goodness is working with tremendous earnestness

and effect against the powers of evil. The leaven is working, the salt is acting, the light is shining amid the darkness. If there are modern Sodoms, the ten righteous are not wanting.

In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward look, the land is bright.¹

The destruction of such a universal evil as slavery, the formation of a public sentiment against war, the new ideal of woman's character and position, are plain indications of the moral tendency of Christianity and pledges of further victories on the same line. It is significant that a much-praised philosopher like Schopenhauer derides the new idea of woman's position and rights created by Christianity, storms at it as unnatural and monstrous, and would go back to heathen usages. We imagine that Christian women will remind the German doctrinaire that the world does not go back upon its steps, and that freedom once won is never renounced.

If we were asked to name the most striking moral difference between the ancient and modern world, we should refer to the growth of the sentiment of humanity. The mercifulness of Christ's character and teaching has made its way into the world's heart. The Beatitudes on the meek and

¹ Clough.

forgiving, the teaching on the love of enemies and on compassion for the poor and needy, the blessing of the little children, the parable of the Good Samaritan, have breathed a new spirit into the world's life, and made a return of the hardness and cruelty of old heathenism impossible. There is, indeed, enough still of the old selfishness and hate. But this is in a minority ; it is condemned by the universal conscience, a conscience which is the work of Christ. It has often been said that the virtue of humanity was unknown in the ancient world ; and despite Plautus's well-known saying, "I am a man, and deem nothing human foreign to me," it is true of antiquity as a whole. Humanity, which is the distinctive mark of the modern world, is the child of Christianity. It pervades our literature. Nothing would astonish the great poets of old more than the gentle, tender spirit of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, Burns, Hood ; and, indeed, the same may be said of older poets like Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. Christ's signature is on them all.

The history of Christian charity is one of the brightest pages of Church history, and one of the most powerful evidences of the faith. The charitable institutions with which Christianity has covered Christendom have no parallel elsewhere.

It is true that under the Roman Empire we have some beginnings in this field, in provision for the poor and orphan children, to say nothing of imperial largesses which sprang partly from political motives. Perhaps these beginnings had some connection with the humane influence of Stoical teaching; in any case they soon passed away. Buddhism is famed for its inculcation of kindness and charity. But what is the condition of Buddhist countries like China and Burmah to-day in this respect in comparison with Christian lands?

From the first days of Christianity we see that care for the poor was encouraged by the Church. Nothing in early Christian life more impressed the heathen world than this. As the Church grew, Christian charity multiplied its objects and improved its methods. It may be true that during the Middle Ages almsgiving was often practised from bad motives, and without discrimination; but we are unwilling to believe that this was the case to a very great extent. Hospitality to strangers, ransom of captives, relief of the poor and sick, were foremost Christian virtues. A German scholar,¹ whose fascinating work, in three volumes, on Christian Beneficence in Early Days, in the Middle Ages, and in Modern Times,

¹ Uhlhorn, *Die christliche Liebesthätigkeit*; the first volume has been translated into English.

shows perfect mastery of the subject, draws a wonderful contrast between the old and new world in this respect. In a terrible but true phrase he calls the old world "a world without love." What do we see now? Every form of suffering met, an army of Christian philanthropists and agencies fighting against the foes of human happiness. The array of merciful institutions of every kind is an ally almost on an equal footing with the Christian Church. Hospitals, asylums, orphanages, refuges, rival churches and cathedrals in wealth and organisation and usefulness. And the Church is extending these merciful charities into heathen lands. In nothing is there a greater contrast between Christian and other countries, or a better measure of the difference between Christianity and heathenism, than in these offices of beneficence. Charity is not something accidental in the Christian system, but a part of its essential spirit, a consequence of its creed. Its self-sacrifice, while perfectly spontaneous, is matter of principle and conviction. No one can wonder at this who remembers the place which love fills in the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Christ makes prominent the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke x. 27), and in the picture of the last judgement makes charity

the final test of character (Matt. xxv.). Paul's great chapter, 1 Cor. xiii., cannot well be forgotten. James calls the second commandment "the royal law" (ii. 8). John's explicit teaching on the subject is well known. See Heb. xiii. 1 ; 1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 17 ; 2 Pet. i. 7.

To trace the effects of Christ or Christianity in every sphere of the world's life would be a long task.¹ What has been said is enough to prove the unique greatness and excellence of the work of Christianity in the world. This fact has often impressed writers who are by no means strongly attached to orthodox beliefs. Bushnell speaks of the "unclassifiable character of Christ." A more recent American writer does not speak too strongly when he describes the universal supremacy of Christ in modern life thus: "Our whole thought of God and man ; our entire working philosophy of life ; our modes of intellectual vision, types of feeling, habits of will ; our instinctive, customary, rational, emotional, institutional, and social existence,—is everywhere encompassed and interpenetrated by Christ. . . . Our human universe is a Christian universe. The best in nature, the best in human history, the best in the hope of the world, is but the image of Christ.

¹ Besides books already mentioned, see Fairbairn, *Religion in History and in Modern Life*.

. . . Man's view of nature is necessarily anthropomorphic ; since the advent of Jesus it has been, among all positive as opposed to negative thinkers, Christomorphic."¹ "The words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth became a perennial source of life, modifying by direct as well as by indirect influence the whole current of men's thoughts and lives, and transforming their civilisation."²

We think that a unique fact of such magnitude is truly described as a moral miracle, as much a miracle in the moral world as the greatest of the gospel miracles in the natural world. How otherwise is it to be explained? On the contrary supposition, the influence of Christ and Christianity in the world is simply of the same kind as that exercised by great moral teachers. We point to the influence on the world's thought and life of such teachers as Plato, Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed, and ask whether Christ is to be classed with them. Is not His influence immeasurably deeper and more elevating? While we do not question the great extent and in many respects the excellence of their permanent work in the world, we hold that it will not bear comparison with Christ's. Indeed, theirs gives us the limit of human

¹ Gordon, *The Christ of To-day* (J. Clarke & Co.).

² Wace, *Christianity and Morality*, p. 147.

efficiency at its greatest; and from that to the work of Christ is a vast distance. If one is human, the other must be divine. It is difficult to see how supernatural power could be manifested more clearly than in a moral transformation of the world of such depth and extent.

CHAPTER V

THE WITNESS OF MIRACLE

ON no subject has there been a greater revolution of thought during the present century than on the subject of miracle. Formerly the chief appeal of apologists was to this evidence. Now the prejudice against miracles is strong, and instead of being a means of defence they need defence. The reason of the change is not far to seek. The great extension of our knowledge of nature has accustomed us to the idea of unbroken law, and we can scarcely tolerate any exception. Matthew Arnold's magisterial dictum, "Miracles do not happen," however unreasonable, expresses the thought of the age. There are large schools of thought, claiming the Christian name, which quietly assume that miracles must be dropped out of sight.

Every believer in miracle believes in the reign of law, of natural law in the natural

world and spiritual in the spiritual. But man himself, the human will, is an exception to the reign of natural law. One of the laws of his life is freedom, which has no place in nature. To the physical sphere he is supernatural, miraculous.¹ Everyone who believes the world was created believes in miracle of the most stupendous kind. And, with all respect for the doctrine of evolution and those who hold it, every absolutely new beginning is miraculous—especially the appearance of life and reason. Special divine action is only a further extension of the same system. In any case let it be noted that miracle is an emphatic recognition of government by law; there would be no exception if there were no rule.

It may be quite true that miracle ought to be unnecessary, that the ordinary manifestations of God ought to be sufficient to secure man's attention and obedience; but unhappily they do not. Men ought to keep the ten commandments, but they do not. We quite admit that the miraculous works of God are insignificant in amount and impressiveness when compared with His ordinary works. What are even the miracles

¹ "The term supernatural is purely relative to what at any particular stage of thought we mean by nature" (Canon Gore, *Bampton Lecture*, p. 35).

of the Gospels in magnitude beside the daily wonders of creation and providence? But we know the deadening effect of daily use and wont. Sin has closed, or at least dimmed, man's eye to the manifestations of God in nature and conscience. Some special means are necessary to restore force to the natural revelation. Thus, the necessity for miracle as for special revelation and redemption is entirely moral. We do not see how anyone who observes the religious indifference of mankind, to speak of nothing worse, can doubt the necessity of some special divine intervention, or can suppose that if the world had been left to itself that indifference would have been remedied. "In a miracle then, or what Scripture calls a sign, God so works that man cannot but notice a presence which is not blind force, but personal will. Thus God violates the customary method of His action, He breaks into the common order of events, in order to manifest the real meaning of nature, and make men alive to the true character of the order, which their eyes behold. Miracles are God's protests against man's blindness to Himself, protests in which He violates a superficial uniformity in the interests of deeper law." ¹

¹ Gore, *Bampton Lecture*, p. 45. The whole of this lecture is deeply suggestive.

We must not forget that by getting rid of the gospel miracles, as rationalists and Ritschlians do, we do not get rid of miracles. If the argument of the previous chapters holds good, the life and work of Christ and the achievements of Christianity in the world, are miraculous in the highest sense. A sinless and infallible Christ is a miracle. As already remarked, the creation of the universe, whatever the method of creation, is the supreme natural miracle. A non-miraculous theism is impossible. As to modes and methods of miraculous action, we need not speculate. Whether the Almighty used natural forces unknown to us or used those of a higher world, or used none at all, the result is the same to us. We need only to be convinced of the fact.

The possibility of miracles is freely conceded even by scientists like Huxley and Tyndall.¹ Hume's famous argument conceded it. His point was that as testimony is fallible and our experience of the uniformity of nature is unbroken, no testimony could ever render a departure from that uniformity credible. Among other fallacies he assumes the point in debate.

¹ So Renan says: "We do not say a miracle is impossible; we say there has been no instance up to this time of a proved miracle" (*Vie de Jésus*, p. 57).

The very question is whether there have not been certain departures from uniformity. There are forms of testimony which carry as strong conviction as laws of nature; and on such testimony we believe in Christ's miracles. Science has shown too clearly the limited extent of our knowledge to allow its disciples in these days to deny the possibility of miracles. But the concession does not mean much. Those who make it scornfully reject the evidence presented. It is quite certain that no evidence available for historical facts would satisfy them. Nothing but a scientific commission, sitting in Jerusalem at the time and cross-examining the witnesses in the light of modern scientific and historical knowledge, would meet their wishes. Of course no such evidence ever was or can be forthcoming. There is no fact in the whole of past history that is supported in this way. The histories of ancient nations are received on far weaker attestation.

Unless the miracles in the gospel story are true, how is the first success of Christianity to be explained? That the miracles formed part of the apostolic preaching is clear from Peter's words (Acts ii. 22). Paul indeed does not explicitly refer to Christ's miracles, but Christ's resurrection filled a foremost place in his

preaching as in that of all the apostles (Acts iii. 15, xxvi. 23; 1 Cor. xv. 4, 12–20; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. i. 3). Paul too claims for himself miraculous power (Rom. xv. 18, 19; 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12; Gal. iii. 5), and must therefore certainly have believed the same of Christ; see also Heb. ii. 4. If the Jews and heathen, who put Christ and apostles and others to death, could have convicted them of falsehood, this would have been the readiest means to extinguish Christianity; but we never find anything of this kind said. The facts were admitted and then explained as the work of magic or Satan. Such was the explanation of Celsus in the second century.

Were the miraculous stories added later, say in the second century? They do not wear the dress of that century, a chief characteristic of which is a childish fondness for the extravagant and fanciful. Witness the “Shepherd” of Hermas at the beginning of the century, and the apocryphal gospels. We have already seen that Justin Martyr in the middle of the century mentions the miracles as a part of Christ’s life. Moreover, if the miracles were inserted afterwards, how does it come to pass that the unity of the Gospels is so perfect? The different elements perfectly cohere. The

miracles cannot be removed without breaking up the text. It would be like taking one of the parts bodily out of one of Handel's oratorios. The Gospel of Mark, which is often regarded as the most matter-of-fact of the Gospels, and which is probably the first in order of time, is really the most charged with the miraculous. Canon Gore says justly: "Miracle is here at its height, its proportion to the whole narrative is greater than in any other Gospel, because of the comparative absence of discourses, and the miracles are exhibitions of supreme power such as do not admit of any naturalistic interpretation."¹

Canon Row in his *Bampton Lectures*, and Dr. Bruce in his *Chief End of Revelation* and *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, argue at unnecessary length, as it seems to the present writer, against the practice of former writers in appealing exclusively to miracles as evidence. We imagine that Paley and Dr. Mozley, who are especially pointed at, would defend themselves by saying that this was the only aspect of miracles which bore on the subject they were considering. On other occasions they would by no means overlook the teaching aspect. Dr. Bruce especially insists that the miracles are not mere seals appended to a divine revelation, but

¹ *Bampton Lecture*, p. 65.

an integral part of that revelation itself, like the parables and discourses of Christ. They reveal God in Christ as much as the discourses. Dr. Bruce has done good service in calling attention to a truth which was perhaps in danger of being forgotten. But there is no inconsistency between the two aspects; indeed, both are necessary. Perhaps in strict truth Christ did not work His miracles *in order* either to attest His mission or to teach God's grace, but simply to do good. The other ends, however precious, are incidental. Canon Row is too insistent on the secondary place of miracles in Christ's plan. It is true Christ appealed to the self-evident character of His teaching. But undeniably He did also appeal to His miracles or, as He calls them, His "works" (Matt. xi. 4, 5; John x. 37, 38); and what He did His servants may do. The use of the term "works" is suggestive. Everyone reveals himself in his works, the genius and the ordinary man alike. No one can help doing this. God's works in nature and providence are self-revelations. So all Christ's works, miraculous and otherwise, reveal His nature and mind. His miracles are natural to Him as our works are to us.

What do His "works" reveal? Undoubtedly not merely His power but His grace. They

repeat His words. His miracles, like His discourses and conversations, are "full of grace and truth." They declare that He came "to seek and to save that which was lost," that He came "not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," to heal sick and raise up dead souls, to be the universal Healer, Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend of man. This is the gospel of the miracles. The revelation they give of God and Christ supports and completes the revelation given throughout Scripture in other forms. They are revelation in act and deed. Who will say that they do not add immensely to the force and certainty of the revelation?

This interpretation has never been wanting in the Church, although recently more attention has been called to it. Miracles as acts of divine power can never be severed from their great moral purpose. They are primarily acts of divine grace, symbols of spiritual truth. Matthew Arnold fancies he disposes of the entire argument by saying that his turning his pen into a pen-wiper would not prove that what he wrote was true. He might have kept back this airy scoff until he had shown that there is a miracle in the Gospels of such an aimless, senseless kind. There is perfect correspondence between Christ's miracles and His mission into the world.

They illuminate each other. How much less vividly we should apprehend the power and condescension of God's grace without the miracles!

A clear proof of the purpose of miracles is the name most frequently given them—"signs." In the Fourth Gospel no other is used. "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory" (ii. 11). "Many other signs did Jesus . . . which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe . . . and that believing ye may have life" (xx. 30). Other names are "miracles" or wonders, because they arrest attention and fill with wonder, and "powers," because they are displays of power (Acts ii. 22). But "signs" reminds us that the acts are means to an end higher than themselves. It is interesting to know that this spiritual meaning was recognised in early days. Replying to Celsus, Origen, the great Alexandrian Father and one of the two greatest of all the Fathers, says: "Show me the magician who calls upon the spectators of his prodigies to reform their life, or who teaches his admirers the fear of God, and seeks to persuade them to act as those who must appear before Him as their judge. The magicians do nothing of the sort, either because they are incapable of it, or because they have no such

desire. . . . In the miracles of Christ, on the contrary, all bear the impress of His own holiness, and He ever uses them as the means of winning to the cause of goodness and truth those who witnessed them. Thus He presented His own life as the perfect model, not only to His immediate disciples, but to all men. If such was the life of Jesus, how can He be compared to mere charlatans, and why may we not believe that He was indeed God manifested in the flesh for the salvation of our race?" To come down to modern days, in the last century Charles Wesley sang :

Jesus, Thee Thy works proclaim
Omnipotently good.

And again :

Works of purest love are Thine,
And miracles of grace.

The loss of the miracles, then, would mean the loss of evidences not merely of power and truth, but of redeeming grace. "The more the acts, by which God manifests His gracious will, stand out from the common course of nature, the more manifestly they serve the purpose intended. Take away miracle from a revelation of grace, and the revelation can hardly be known for what it is. . . . The miracles and the purpose stand or fall together" (Bruce).

The miracles, if established, are of course direct demonstrations of divine power and authority. No inference is necessary as in the case of the former arguments. Miracles are the divine signature written right across the life of Christ, large enough and plain enough for all to read. They are especially the evidence for the masses. Nicodemus expressed the common judgement of mankind when he said: "No man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him" (John iii. 2). Like the design argument in the proof of theism, miracles are easily understood by all. It is not too much to say that without them the spread of Christianity would have been much less rapid among the masses of mankind; and a religion whose blessings are intended for all should be accompanied by marks of truth which appeal to all.¹

¹ See the last lecture in Dr. Bruce's *Miraculous Element*, etc., on "Christianity without Miracles."

CHAPTER VI

THE WITNESS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

CHRIST'S resurrection as the miracle of miracles and sign of signs deserves separate consideration. A great advantage in the use of this argument is that the New Testament is irrevocably committed to the bodily resurrection of Christ. No other miracle is appealed to separately as this one is. Christ Himself repeatedly foretold it (Matt. xvi. 21, xx. 19; Luke ix. 31; John ii. 20, 21). It was the constant theme of apostolic preaching and teaching (Acts ii. 24, iii. 26, iv. 10, v. 30, x. 40, xiii. 30, 34, 37, xvii. 31, xxvi. 23). Each one of the four Gospels gives a full account of it.¹ The Epistles constantly assume and apply the fact in proving, illustrating, and enforcing

¹ The slight discrepancies in details in the Gospels are much dwelt upon as invalidating the history, but they are insignificant beside the substantial agreement. The importance given to such details by rationalists proves the weakness of their case.

religious doctrine (Rom. iv. 25, vi. 9, viii. 11, 34; 1 Cor. xv. 4, 20; Gal. i. 1; Phil. iii. 10; Col. iii. 1; 1 Thess. iv. 14; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. i. 3; Rev. i. 18). We have an example of the way in which the fact is assumed as well as explicitly asserted in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In an epistle which treats expressly of Christ's sacrificial death and its effects, we might expect frequent mention of Christ's resurrection. But Heb. xiii. 20 is the only reference. That reference, however, shows that the fact was part of the writer's faith, and present to his thought throughout. We thus see that the authority of the New Testament, of the apostles, and even of Christ Himself, is involved in the truth of the resurrection. The essential importance given to the fact in the New Testament makes it impossible to escape from this position. It is not treated as incidental, but as a belief from which the most important inferences are drawn. Renan, Abbott, rationalists, Ritschlians may write as they please about retaining the kernel of spiritual truth after the husk of the historical fact is thrown away, but in the present case the two are inseparable. The inference is unavoidable that, if the resurrection of Christ did not take place, Christ, the apostles, and the early Church were essentially mistaken.

While the apostles Peter and John are witnesses to the fact, Paul is so in a peculiar way. The resurrection played an important part in his personal history, and fills a prominent place in his writings. He may almost be called in a special sense the apostle of the resurrection, having had nearly as great an influence on the interpretation of this doctrine in the Church as on the interpretation of redemption. It was conviction of this truth which made him a Christian. He was satisfied that on the way to Damascus he saw Christ. "Last of all He appeared to me also" (1 Cor. xv. 8). The expression is the same as in the other cases: "He appeared to Cephas, to the twelve, to above five hundred brethren at once, to James, to all the apostles." Unless the latter appearances were visions in the sense of mental appearances without any external reality or object, Paul's was not a vision in this sense. He did not see the earthly Christ like the other apostles, but he saw the heavenly Christ as He now is. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (1 Cor. ix. 1). He is there adducing the proofs of his full apostleship. Paul evidently regards this event in his life as putting him on an equality with the other apostles. 2 Cor. xii. 1-7 amply proves that Paul was able to distinguish between

mere mental visions and visions of real objects ("I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord"). According to him, Christianity stands or falls with this truth of the resurrection: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain; your faith also is vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). Although Paul was not one of those who accompanied with the apostles during Christ's earthly life, we know that he had long and frequent intercourse with them (Acts ix. 27, 28; Gal. i. 18, 19), and must have known whether his own faith agreed with theirs.

The account given by rationalism of Paul's conversion is to the effect that the murder of Stephen had made a deep impression upon him, which was subsequently deepened by reflection into strong compunction, so that when he set out for Damascus he was already half converted. It only needed a storm in the air to complete the work. This is mere hypothesis, with nothing in the history to support it. We are told that he started for Damascus "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1). We have three accounts of the fact, one from Luke and two from Paul himself (Acts ix., xxii., xxvi.); in none of these is there any hint of the modern rationalist or "psychological" explanation. Of course Paul

may have been mistaken, as we may be mistaken about our own identity, or about anything we see and hear, say and do ; but the probability of mistake in such a case is remote indeed. Men do not make such a change in their life as Paul did without overwhelming reasons.

That Paul himself believed in Christ's resurrection is now universally admitted. Still more, it is universally admitted that the other apostles did so, and the whole of the early Christian Church. The apostles everywhere assume that the faith they express in the Epistles is the faith of the Churches to which they are writing. That faith of the Church is confirmed by many facts. The observance of the Lord's Day and the annual celebration of the Easter feast, both going back to the earliest times, are evidences. As to the Lord's Day, see Rev. i. 10 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 2. One of the earliest disputes in the Church was one between the eastern and western branches of the Church in the second century respecting the proper day for observing Easter, and the difference has continued to the present time. The fact of the resurrection is found in the earliest forms of the Apostles' Creed, *e.g.* in the creeds of Irenæus and Tertullian at the turn of the second and third centuries. But the fact of the faith of the early Church in the bodily resur-

rection is not denied. Strauss says: "The historian must acknowledge that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus was risen."¹ Keim writes: "It is upon an empty tomb that the Christian Church is founded." Of course, such an admission is a giving up of the old assertion that the apostles were guilty of imposture.

How then did this universal, all-conquering faith arise, if not from the fact itself? The favourite explanation at present, and the only one worth discussing,² is that the first Christians had visions of certain appearances which they mistook for realities. Christ had made such an impression upon them that they could not believe that He was really dead, or if dead would not return to life. In this state of eager expectation and ecstasy, it was only necessary for one disciple to fancy he had really seen Christ restored to life to set afoot the belief that He had risen. Mary had the first vision, and she communicated the enthusiasm to others. In the excited state of the disciples the notion spread rapidly. In this way Renan and the

¹ Godet, *Defence of the Christian Faith*, p. 23.

² The suggestion that Christ only swooned on the cross and afterwards revived, and similar suggestions, are too childish to waste time upon. Learned men only adopt them when reduced to desperate straits.

majority of rationalists to-day explain the origin of the faith of the early Church on this subject.

There is no evidence of the enthusiastic expectation of Christ's return to life which this theory supposes. The idea of resurrection was by no means a familiar one to the Jews. It is true that Christ had foretold His rising again, but there is nothing to show that the idea had taken hold of the disciples. On the contrary, everything in the history shows that they were plunged in doubt and dismay. If Mary was full of ecstatic hope, how was it that she supposed Christ to be the gardener? The two disciples on the way to Emmaus are sad and despondent. Nicodemus brought a large quantity of spices to the tomb to embalm, or, at least for a time to preserve, the body (John xix. 39). We are told that the women who came first to the tomb, and who also had brought spices, "fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid" (Mark xvi. 1, 8). Even at the time of the Ascension we read, "some doubted" (Matt. xxviii. 17). This is the only evidence we have to show the state of mind of the disciples as affected by the crucifixion, and we see it is a state of perplexity and despair. The rationalist explanation of the genesis of

their faith is as pure hypothesis as the explanation of Saul's conversion. Is it possible that such a mood could give birth to the serene, triumphant faith we see in the first Christians? Psychologically and rationally it is impossible. Then, how remarkable that there should be a series of visions, that not only Mary, but Cephas, James, the twelve, the five hundred, should have identical visions! It is not the habit of dreams and visions to repeat themselves in this way. But having begun, why should they cease? Why are they not going on still? Moreover, the visions are not limited to vague appearances. They include conversations with Christ, partaking of food together (John xxi.), the receiving of special instructions and commands (Matt. xxviii. 19; Acts i. 3).

Do the apostles appear like men unable to distinguish between phantom and reality? They give no impression of aberration on other subjects. Their words and acts are those of men of perfect sanity. Between the Gospels and the Acts they have undergone a remarkable change; courage has taken the place of fear. Peter is a remarkable illustration of this. Although afterwards his old weakness reappeared in minor matters, on the whole he was firm and strenuous. How can this transformation be

explained? Their faith in the resurrection is one explanation, but we know of no other.

The effect of their faith is the Christian Church with its great history from that day to the present. According to rationalism that history is founded on a gigantic blunder! The first apostles were mistaken, and the whole Church has been mistaken with them! The greatest force on the side of righteousness and truth the world has ever seen sprang from an illusion! Is this credible? It requires immense credulity to be an unbeliever on this subject. The creed of the Church requires far less faith than unbelief does. Keim says: "It would be difficult to understand how from a society held together by over-excitement, issuing in visions, could have proceeded the Christian Church, with its lucidity of thought and earnestness of moral activity." "Difficult" indeed! According to this theory, instead of the resurrection creating faith, faith creates the resurrection.

Our position is that this faith of the early Church, universally admitted to have been the basis of the Church, can only be explained by the actual occurrence of the resurrection. On any other supposition that faith remains an insoluble enigma. The great rationalist, F. C. Baur, somewhere says that we only need faith in

the resurrection to explain the existence and growth of the Church; but he does not show how we can get the faith in any other than the Church's way.

The resurrection of Christ is no mere seal appended to the Christian system, but an integral part, in a sense the centre, of that system. We know in what intimate relation it stands in the apostolic teaching to other doctrines—the atonement, fellowship with God, the future resurrection. Christians share in the resurrection as they share in the atoning death; the two are inseparable. Christ was “delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification” (Rom. iv. 25); *i.e.* to atone for our trespasses, and to effect our justification. Godet's and Moule's interpretation in their commentaries to the effect, that as our trespasses were the occasion of the death, so our justification, provisionally accomplished, was the occasion of the resurrection, seems to the present writer very strained. The expressions of the apostle (*διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν—διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν*) are quite general; the nature of the relation must be learnt from the context and the subject. It is through the risen, not merely through the dying, Redeemer that man is justified. The two events are part of one indivisible act of grace, the great redeem-

ing act of God. Undoubtedly redemption is very closely connected in the New Testament with the death. But how can the death be considered apart from the resurrection? If we are "reconciled" by the one, we are "saved" by the other (Rom. v. 10). Undoubtedly the two events have been too much separated in Christian thought and teaching. The cross has been the favourite symbol of Christianity, to the exclusion of the empty tomb. If the apostle glories in the cross (Gal. vi. 14), we see from Rom. viii. 34 ("It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather that was raised again") and 1 Cor. xv. 57 that it was in the resurrection that he found his final ground of confidence and triumphant joy.¹

¹ The manifold relations of the resurrection should be studied in Bishop Westcott's great book, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*.

CHAPTER VII

THE WITNESS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

THE present argument, while on different lines from the former ones, is their crown. It consists in the confirmation by experience of the teaching of Scripture. In its very nature Christianity appeals to the test of experience. It makes promises and offers blessings which everyone may prove for himself. It is not a system of abstract doctrine appealing only to the intellect, nor yet primarily a history of certain persons and events of merely historical interest, but a provision of practical help for right being and doing, such as all need and may enjoy. It offers forgiveness, moral health and strength, the assurance of divine favour and immortal hope, the grace of a perfect life, in short, salvation or eternal life, to all on certain conditions. I fulfil the conditions and these gifts become consciously mine; the promises of Scripture are verified in me. Christ says: "Take My yoke upon you, and

learn of Me; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The apostles say: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. This believing or receiving is a moral act of a very special kind. It is not a mere intellectual faith, although this is included, but a belief in Christ as a personal Saviour, in what He has done and will do for me, an act of the whole moral nature of man—trust in Christ, submission to Him, devotion to His service. Directly this act of submission is performed the promised effect follows. All that Christ and the apostles promise takes place. Inward peace with God, conscious power over evil, ardent love of righteousness, a new joy and hope and confidence are experienced. Paul's experience in Rom. v. 1-11 is that of every Christian believer.

This test is one easily applied and within the reach of all. If the experience were a rare one, we might question its reality. But it has been and is the possession of myriads. My spiritual history is that of Christians in all ages and lands, of men of all races and in every variety of outward condition. The same inner and outward transformation is witnessed everywhere. This test has been applied under conditions apparently the most difficult and desperate. In countless cases, where all attempts at moral reformation

had failed or but partially succeeded, miracles of penitence and reformation have been wrought. Very often Christianity is tried as a last resort, and the hope is fulfilled. Great sinners turned into good men and even into great saints are the unanswered and unanswerable evidence of divine grace. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." "That which was lost!" Ancient civilisation and philosophy gave up the problem of saving the ignorant and reprobate. It had no message for the lost. Modern philosophy is in the same condition. A recent writer could suggest nothing but the destruction of the diseased members of society. Christianity succeeds in these conditions, because it brings a message of divine power and promise and hope. It inspires faith in God's universal love. It says, "God willeth that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." "Look unto Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth."

There are many subjects on which it is enough for us to have knowledge at second-hand. On all historical subjects nothing else is possible. In the knowledge of science and of foreign lands this is also largely the case. But in religion second-hand knowledge is not to be tolerated. Nothing but immediate knowledge will suffice.

Any foreign dependence is fatal to peace and certainty. And immediate knowledge is possible. The soul can be brought into close fellowship with God. This is the true, sound mysticism of Scripture (Rom. v. 1; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 17; 1 John i. 3; John xiv. 23, xv. 1-7).

There is the same difference between knowing salvation on testimony and knowing it by experience, as between knowing France or America on report and knowing it by experience. This illustration may cast further light on the relations between the two kinds of knowledge. It may be said, "If I know Christ and Scripture by experience, what need of anything more?" The knowledge which I gain of another country even by many visits is only imperfect; I am only brought into touch with it at certain points. If I wish thorough knowledge, I must avail myself of the services of others. So the general knowledge of natural objects serves the practical purposes of life. But if I wish full and accurate knowledge, I must experiment for myself or use the researches of others. In the same way experience puts me in the possession of the practical benefits of Christianity; but it does not give knowledge of its origin and history and development. For this I need other teaching. Here is the use of theology and philosophy. This

higher knowledge is not necessary to the multitude of Christians. As a rule, it comes after experimental knowledge, and in the majority of cases not at all. It is impossible to fix a minimum of necessary knowledge, and none is fixed in Scripture. In many cases the minimum is small indeed, as in the penitent thief and even in Saul at the time of his conversion. By divine mercy very little knowledge and weak faith are enough for salvation.

Only the experience of what faith in Christ has done for me gives me certainty beyond the reach of doubt. Whenever tempted to doubt and fear, I fall back on what I have known of answers to prayer, the power of sin broken, faithfulness to God maintained. "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." All the previous arguments together do not yield supreme certainty. The proof of experience suffices without the others; the others do not suffice without this. Yet all have their use and place. The former arguments often lead to this crowning one, and this final one often precedes the others.

Coleridge used to say: "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together, and the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being." Protestantism has always, in consistency with

its principles, laid stress on the personal evidence. The Reformers spoke of the "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit" (*testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*), by which they meant a God-inspired conviction of the truth of Scripture. The nature of the testimony is, we think, better described as above. This testimony is the substitute for the infallible external authority of Rome. Richard Baxter, in his *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, expounds this argument with great clearness and force. "So if the tempter should persuade such a man to doubt whether the gospel be true, or be God's word, this believer may have recourse into his soul for a testimony of it; thence he can tell the tempter by experience that he hath found the promises of this gospel made good to him. Christ hath there promised to send His Spirit into the souls of His people, and so He hath done by me; He hath promised to give light to them that sit in darkness, and to guide their feet into the ways of peace, to bind up the broken-hearted, and set at liberty the captives; and all this He hath fulfilled upon me; all that He hath spoken about the power of His word and grace, and the nature of its effects, I have found upon myself. The help which He promised in temptations, the hearing of prayer, the relief in distress; all these I have found performed;

and therefore I know the gospel is true." Baxter was in advance of his day in the breadth and clearness of his treatment. Chapter vi. of the work mentioned treats "of the witness of Jesus Christ, or the demonstrative evidence of His verity and authority, namely, the Spirit, in four parts: 1, Antecedently by prophecy; 2, Constitutively and inherently, the image of God, on His person, life, and doctrine; 3, Concomitantly, by the miraculous power and works of Christ and His disciples; 4, Subsequently, in the actual salvation of men by renovation." ¹ It is interesting to find in an old writer an anticipation of modern lines of thought; but this is by no means unusual in Baxter. Owen, Watts, Jonathan Edwards, Hodge follow in the same course. Edwards describes the effects of conversion thus: "The appearance of everything is altered; there seems to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast of appearance of divine glory in almost everything. God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity and love seem to appear in everything; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature."

These writers all base the certainty of salvation

¹ Stearns, *The Evidence of Christian Experience*, p. 392 (Nisbet & Co.), a most luminous survey of this particular argument.

on the effect of the Spirit's work in the individual. John Wesley goes a step further, and interprets Rom. viii. 16 of an immediate witness of the Holy Spirit to and with the believing soul. This immediate witness is not enjoyed by all Christians. Where it is enjoyed, it supplements and completes the indirect evidence of the life, and is the source of invincible faith and courage.

Dr. Dale, in his admirable work, *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, carries this argument to great lengths, making the personal consciousness of salvation independent to a large extent of the Gospels. He supposes the case of a man, who through the Gospels finds his way to Christ and to a new life in Christ, and afterwards discovers that many things in the Gospels are untrustworthy. But, as his faith has found new ground, it is not shaken by the discovery. In reference to this supposed case we may say that much depends on the extent of the errors discovered. If they relate to secondary points, Dr. Dale's conclusion is right. But if they involve the essential facts, we doubt this. If anyone were to learn that the substance of the story which led him to faith in Christ was untrustworthy, would he not conclude that his whole course had been mistaken and his experience in some way an illusion? This is at least a possible

inference, and some would say the logical one. The Samaritan woman said: "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves" (John iv. 42). But if she had subsequently found out that their "speaking" was mistaken, would her faith have remained as firm?

Dr. Dale goes to an extreme in supposing the Gospels to be all but completely lost, and that we only knew Christ as a great religious teacher, who was crucified and was believed by His disciples to have risen again (p. 40). We might still believe and find salvation in Him, because the experience of centuries remains to testify to the power of such faith. The case is put as an extreme one. The bare testimony of another's experience would seldom inspire faith. Anyone exhorted to believe would naturally reply, "What am I to believe? Why am I to believe? Who and what was Christ?" In other words, faith must have sufficient grounds and contents. Men cannot believe in a vague, blind way. In the case supposed, the first believers must have had fuller light, which then went out in darkness. Dr. Dale is more practical when he says that individual experiences verify the *substantial* truth of the Gospels. It is obvious that they can do no

more; but so much they suppose. There is danger of laying more weight on the personal argument than it will bear. It can never stand alone. When assailed by fierce storms of doubt, we need other refuge to flee to. The substantial truth of the Gospels, the work of Christianity in the world, the experience of generations of Christians, are essential antecedents to this crowning argument.

CONCLUSION

The force of these seven lines of argument is increased by their cumulative character. We must add them together to feel their full weight. They are one sevenfold proof, rather than seven distinct proofs, a sevenfold divine witness to the truth of Scripture. God reveals Himself in the contents of Scripture, in prophecy, in Christ's life and character, in history, in miracle, in Christ's resurrection, in the individual Christian life. These several revelations appeal with different force to different temperaments. Generally some one of them bears the chief burden of individual faith. Together they form an argument that will not soon be disposed of. It is often said that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Which of these seven links is weak? In

the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established (Matt. xviii. 16). But what of seven independent yet harmonious witnesses? Or rather, what of seven distinct testimonies of God borne in as many different forms? "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater" (1 John v. 9). Can there be a more impressive fact than that God should come forth to set His sevenfold seal on His written word? We are reminded of Christ's solemn witness to the Old Testament. "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John x. 35). "I came to fulfil the law and the prophets" (Matt. v. 17). "All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning Me" (Luke xxiv. 44).

SECTION III

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

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IT will be well first of all to refer to the view maintained in the Roman Church and other places to the effect that Scripture depends for its authority on the Church. This we deny. It is often said that as the Church existed before Scripture and produced it, the Church must be the superior authority. In what sense is it true that the Church existed before Scripture and produced it? Granting that the Church existed before the New Testament, the latter existed virtually in the teaching and authority of the apostles, who, while belonging to the Church, were also over it. Authority resided in them; the Church was under them. The change made by the appearance of the New Testament was only one of form. It is in the same sense that the Church produced Scripture. The apostles were members of the Church, but they were also its rulers under Christ. It is more correct to

say that they were given, as Scripture was given, to the Church.

Moreover, if the Church gives authority to Scripture, who gives the Church its authority? Christ and the apostles. Yes, but where do we learn this? On what are we dependent for all we know about the nature and purpose and power of the Church? Is not Scripture itself the source of all knowledge and proof on the subject? How can a Roman Catholic try to prove his doctrine of the Church but from the sayings of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament? He must first be satisfied of the trustworthiness and divine authority of the New Testament itself. If the Church draws its title-deeds from Scripture, Scripture cannot at the same time draw its title-deeds from the Church. Such mutual attestation is quite inadmissible.

Again, there is no record of the Church ever having acted in the way supposed. The Church never professed to endorse or ratify Scripture. The first General Council that pronounced on the subject was the Roman one of Trent in the sixteenth century. The first General Council of Nicæa, 325 A.D., assumed Scripture as it exists and interpreted it. No act of authorisation on the part of the Church can be produced. Was the Church without authoritative Scripture up

to the year 325? And just as little do Christian writers ever assume such authority. They simply recognise and interpret Scripture. To them "It is written" is the final appeal.¹

The general trustworthiness and authority of Scripture, maintained in the former chapters, is of so strong a character and so superior to anything belonging to other writings, that, even if there were nothing more to be said, no Christian would need to fear for his faith. But, in claiming divine inspiration for Scripture, the Church as a whole has gone further. What is the meaning of the term, and what are the grounds of this further belief?

It cannot be said that the doctrine of inspiration is drawn directly from Scripture. It is drawn indirectly, or by inference. While the words "reveal" and "revelation" frequently occur in the New Testament, inspiration is only referred to once (2 Tim. iii. 16).² Inspiration is mainly, if not entirely, a doctrine by which we explain the phenomena of Scripture. Thus the New Testament does not expressly assert the inspiration of the Old, but Christ and the apostles use the Old in a way such as can only be explained on the supposition that it is

¹ See p. 65.

² Westcott, *Introd. to Gospels*, 5th ed. p. 9.

divinely inspired. The inspiration of the New Testament must be argued in a similar way.

But what is meant by the word inspiration? This again can only be gathered inferentially from Scripture. As to its meaning in theological writers, there is no term that is used in so great a variety of senses. Hardly any two writers give it the same meaning. A recent writer makes it the preparation of the mind and heart for the reception of divine revelation or communications;¹ and Bishop Westcott seems to hold the same view.² This is a quite admissible meaning. We speak of inspired persons in the first instance. "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). Still this work of the Spirit on the persons chosen to be the organs of revelation is remote from us. What we have to do with is the product of that work in its permanent result. The usage of the Church from the beginning has been to speak of Scripture itself as inspired; and there is justification for the usage both in the nature of the case and in apostolic practice. The inspiration of the prophet or apostle is only known to us and important to us in so far as it is permanently embodied in their work. We hold,

¹ Rooke, *Inspiration and other Lectures*, p. 132.

² *Ibid.* p. 8.

therefore, despite many assertions to the contrary, that it is quite legitimate to speak of the inspiration of Scripture. The inspiration of prophet and apostle passes into his work as the genius of poet or painter does. In 2 Tim. iii. 16 the term "God-inspired" is applied, on any interpretation of the passage, to Scripture or "the sacred writings." The latter passage is often said to be ambiguous, leaving us in doubt as to what the term Scripture means. But we know as matter of fact that the Jews applied these titles to certain books, and that they regarded no other books as divinely inspired.¹

With respect to the Old Testament, our position is that Christ and the apostles habitually refer to it and use it as a divine book. They assume the truth of the Jewish faith respecting the ancient Scriptures. The evidence is found less in single utterances than in the assumption on which their entire teaching rests. The Old Testament pervades the New. Besides the numerous express quotations the allusions are still more significant. Christ and the apostles could not have spoken as they do unless they had regarded the Old Testament in the form in which the Jews possessed and we

¹ Vulgate: "Omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata." See Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 88.

possess it as divine. In the temptation Christ thrice quotes Deuteronomy as a final authority (Matt. iv.). In Matt. xv. 4 He prefixes two sentences from Exodus with "God said," adding, "Ye have made void the word of God," ver. 6. In Matt. v. 18 "the law" seems to stand for the entire Old Testament; heaven and earth shall pass away rather than that the law should fail. In John x. 35 Christ says, "The Scripture cannot be broken." He habitually speaks of Scripture as full of prophecy about Himself, which must needs be fulfilled (Luke xxiv. 27, 44; John v. 39, 46). In Matt. i. 22, ii. 15 we read "that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet." St. Peter said: "It was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David" (Acts i. 16). St. Paul: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah" (Acts xxviii. 26). In Heb. i. 5, 6, 7-13, viii. 8-12, x. 5-7, several passages of the Psalms are ascribed to God. In Heb. x. 15 a passage of Jeremiah is introduced with "The Holy Ghost beareth witness to us." In Heb. iii. 7-11, "The Holy Spirit saith," in reference to quotations from the Psalms. It would be a pure evasion to say that these references apply only to the passages mentioned. In such incidental allusions we see

the belief of the writers respecting the Old Testament. In Rom. iii. 21 St. Paul uses the same phrase as Christ in Matt. v. 17, "the law and the prophets." In iii. 4, 10, we have "It is written" used of quotations from the Psalms, —another parallel to our Lord's usage. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (Gal. iii. 8), is a striking expression. St. Paul uses the phrases, "the holy Scriptures, the Scriptures of the prophets" (Rom. i. 2, xvi. 26). In addition to this we must remember that great portions of the Old Testament expressly claim to be from God, being introduced by such forms as "The word of the Lord came," "God said," etc., Isa. viii. 1, and often.

This habitual use of the Old Testament proves incontestably that our Lord and His apostles shared the belief of the Jews in the Old Testament as a divine book, the word of God. Such appeals to the Old Testament as an authority are very different from the mere reference to Old Testament books under their current titles. The latter may not ratify the current Jewish opinion, but the former express the belief of Christ Himself and the apostles. It is quite impossible to reconcile a mistake in such a case with the maintenance of their authority as teachers.

It should be observed that nothing said by Christ and the apostles commits us to the extreme views of minute verbal perfection to be found in Philo and Josephus, and still more in the early Rabbis of Judaism. Examples of this rigid literalism may be found in abundance in Dr. Sanday's work on "Inspiration"¹ and elsewhere. Philo "lays down broadly that there is nothing superfluous in the law. Little words that are seemingly unnecessary, and indeed just because they seem unnecessary, all have their deeper meaning. . . . The smallest and most subsidiary parts of speech acquire on this method exaggerated importance and receive elaborately extended meanings." This exaggerated view of inspiration explains the allegorical method of interpretation, which read such worlds of meaning into the simplest matters of fact. There is nothing of all this in the New Testament.² Just as our Lord draws a sharp distinction between the sabbath-law and Jewish sabbatarianism (Matt. xii. 2; John v. 16, 17), so He always avoided the rabbinical idolatry of the letter of Scripture. These current exaggerations give by contrast greater force to the practice of Christ. If He had accommodated Himself to Jewish

¹ Pp. 72-90.

² A slight exception is alleged in Gal. iii. 16, iv. 24.

opinion, He would have spoken as Josephus and Philo do, to say nothing of later rabbis. And yet there is an element of truth common to the two lines of teaching.

With respect to the New Testament there is a strong presumption from the inspiration of the Old Testament to that of the New. The second is the complement of the first. Analogy suggests that the second body of sacred writings, proceeding from chosen servants of Christ, were written under similar conditions to the first. On the one hand, we know that Christ promised the Holy Spirit to aid the apostles in their public apologies for themselves and their faith (Matt. x. 18, 19), that He did not complete His work of revelation because of the unripeness of the disciples (John xvi. 12), that the Holy Spirit was to continue and complete the work which Christ left unfinished (xvi. 13); and on the other hand, that the Gospels and Epistles come from the hands of the apostles and their companions. If Christ's promises were fulfilled, where else are we to find the fulfilment? In the interval between the resurrection and the ascension, He spoke to the disciples of "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3). Nothing is more probable than that these teachings are to be found in the apostolic writings. We do not know how the

apostles could have written in such a tone of authority, unless they were conscious of writing under special divine influence (Gal. i. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 3). In the latter passage the old prophets and the apostles are put on an equality. The Second Epistle of Peter indeed is not strong in external testimony; but we find the same equality in Eph. ii. 20.¹ Then, from the earliest days of the Church we find the New Testament put on a level in point of inspiration with the Old Testament. We are not to believe simply because the early Church believed; but the fact shows how those who stood nearest to the apostles understood their teaching.

It will be said that so far we have said nothing about the nature of inspiration. In this we have only followed the example of the Church as a whole, which has never committed itself to a theory or definition. As in the case of miracles generally, while the fact has been universally accepted, no definition has been attempted. Individual writers have been busy in speculation; but it cannot be said that any general agreement has been arrived at. As in the case of miracles, we know what is meant in general; but directly we begin to define, we fall into confusion and difficulty. We

¹ It is, of course, possible that New Testament prophets are meant here.

do not wonder at this. All definition must include some reference to modes of action. And how can we understand the mode of action in what is essentially miraculous? All who have thought on the subject seem driven to accept degrees of inspiration, but no two writers agree in the account they give of such degrees. The ancient Jews held three degrees in correspondence with the threefold division of the Scriptures, and Christian writers have suggested similar distinctions. In recent times we hear of verbal, dynamical, and plenary inspiration. The last two terms are confessedly indefinite. "Dynamical" is meant to intimate that the divine influence, instead of suppressing, works through the faculties of the writers. "Verbal," while definite enough in appearance, is in reality as indefinite as the other terms, because limitations and qualifications are admitted to such an extent as to completely change its meaning. Nearly every writer has a different theory on the subject. To review the history of opinions tends rather to confusion than to clearness of thought; we therefore attempt no such review.

Everyone who believes in inspiration at all sees that there must be verbal inspiration to a considerable though undefined extent. Whenever new truth is revealed to the writer (Gal. i.

12), and there must be much both in the Old and the New Testament, it must have been given in words, for words and thoughts are inseparable. "The slightest consideration will show that words are as essential to intellectual processes as they are to mutual intercourse. For man the purely spiritual and absolute is but an inspiration or a dream. Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as soul to body."¹ "Which things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. iii. 13). If these words of Paul apply primarily to oral teaching, they must apply still more to written, official teaching.

In the histories of Scripture inspiration is still present, though of another kind. Every reader must be conscious of a great difference between these and ordinary histories. The former have a religious purpose throughout. They relate not all the events referred to, but only so much of them as bears upon the working out of the divine purpose in the world. "History was not with them a series of disconnected annals of wars and dynasties. It was rather a gradual unfolding of the kingdom of God upon earth, or, in other words, of the purpose of God according to selection."²

¹ Westcott, *Introduction*, p. 14.

² Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 162.

Inspiration is here quite consistent with the work of collecting and selecting material from ordinary sources of information.¹ But without divine guidance it is difficult to explain the peculiar qualities of Scripture history.

The analogy between inspiration and incarnation has often been remarked on. Not that the analogy explains anything, but it indicates the existence of two equally great mysteries. The mystery of the incarnation arises from the union of the divine and the human in one person, distinct and yet one. It is impossible everywhere to draw a line between the two. In the same way Scripture is both divine and human, only that in the incarnation the human is without flaw or fault. The Church has never attempted a complete definition of the incarnation. The early Creeds and Councils only seek to guard certain essential points, and are far more negative than positive; they rather exclude error than define truth. A further analogy is seen in the fact that in both cases the first tendency of the Church was to exaggerate the divine. In early Christian days the human side of Christ's life and person was almost lost in the divine, although the Creeds and Councils are not chargeable with this fault. But in early Christian writers the

¹ Luke i. 1-3.

influence of the docetic spirit, which made the Lord's humanity a mere appearance, was very strong. In a similar way early views of inspiration exaggerated the divine element to the neglect or suppression of the human. One writer after another speaks as if the writers of Scripture were as passive in the hands of the Spirit as a lyre in the hands of the musician. Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian are full of language to this effect.¹ This fact is no doubt partly explained by the transference to the New Testament of the Jewish faith respecting the Old. But it is better explained as the result of the overpowering impression made by New Testament Scripture on the mind of the early Church. In our days it is the human which receives the chief emphasis; the divine needs to be enforced by proof and illustration. The evidence adduced in former paragraphs indicates the way in which this may be done.

The fault of most of the theories of inspiration is their *à priori* character. Instead of being drawn from the facts to be explained, they are brought to the facts. The only way of arriving at a true theory is in the first place to make a

¹ Sanday, *Inspiration*, pp. 28-47. See the full catena of evidence in Westcott, *Introduction*, "Primitive Doctrine of Inspiration," pp. 413-452.

complete induction of the phenomena in question, and then to inquire what these suggest or require as their cause. In the case of inspiration this course has been too much neglected. Every true theory will find a place for all the facts. For example, one of the outstanding features of Scripture is the development both of doctrine and morals. The different stages are clearly marked off. Every theory therefore must recognise incomplete and imperfect as well as perfect stages of thought and practice. Inspiration does not imply equally clear views of truth and equally high ideas of right in the days of Abraham and Moses and David as in the days of Paul and John. We must allow for progress in revelation and knowledge. In no other way can we explain the existence of such different ideas of immortality, truth, and love as we find in the two Testaments. The imprecatory Psalms come under this head. Of course it must not be overlooked that the Old Testament religion is as far in advance of religion in the surrounding nations as it is behind New Testament times. Thus inspiration must take account of and be adapted to the principle of development.¹

¹ Sanday, *Inspiration*, "The Traditional and Inductive Theories of Inspiration compared," p. 391.

Similarly, if there are discrepancies and errors in matters of historical and scientific fact, these must be taken into account in framing any definition of inspiration; *i.e.* we should have to think that it did not enter into the design of inspiration to insure minute accuracy in secondary matters. We say "if there are discrepancies," because this is a question of fact; and, if a fact is established, we have nothing to do but admit it. Many discrepancies, *e.g.* those in specifying numbers in the Old Testament, may be the result of accidental circumstances, such as errors of transmitters and copyists. Many transactions which offend the Christian sense of right are simply recorded without being approved, such as acts of Jacob, Jael, and David. In the end, the real, proved discrepancies will probably turn out to be quite insignificant both in number and character.¹ "Of the real difficulties which remain, some can be met by a fair appreciation of all the circumstances of the case, and by an application of the higher standard of divine justice. Others are very simply explained by the great principle of development, or gradual education of our race in

¹ Instances quoted are Matt. xx. 29-32 compared with Luke xviii. 35-43, Matt. xxvii. 44 with Luke xxiii. 39-43, Matt. viii. 28 with parallels. In the Old Testament passages in Kings and Chronicles.

morals and religion, no less than in intellectual science.”¹ Something may be left in Scripture, as in Nature and Providence, for the trial of our faith. Origen long ago reminded us that “he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the author of Nature may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of Nature,” a lesson which Bishop Butler illustrated in a way the world will never forget. “And thus we see that the only question concerning the truth of Christianity is whether it is a real revelation; not whether it is attended with every circumstance which we should look for. And concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it is what it claims to be; not whether it be a book of such a sort, and so promulgated as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a divine revelation should. And therefore neither obscurity, nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of the like kind, though they had been much more considerable in degree than they are, could overthrow the authority of Scripture, unless the prophets, apostles, or our Lord, had promised that the book containing the divine revelation should be

¹ Rooke, *Inspiration*, p. 174.

secure from these things.”¹ This is Butler’s inference from the position that we are in no way competent to judge beforehand the methods and degrees in which God would give man either natural or supernatural knowledge. There were many things in the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus which served as trials of faith. He had to say, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in Me” (Matt. xi. 6). The same is true of Scripture, which is thus in keeping with every other revelation of God, even the highest.

Many able writers, whose evangelical and orthodox position is beyond dispute, have seen no danger in admitting the possibility of error in the secondary details of Scripture. It may be worth while to give some examples of this. Dorner says : “Freedom from error applies to the external and human only so far as it stands in essential connection with spiritual truth. . . . The possibility of what is erroneous or inaccurate in non-spiritual things is even part of the complete historical character of religion, because holy men could and only needed to be raised as to physical, geographical, and similar matters above those conceptions of their days, from which no danger to the pure knowledge of the divine was

¹ *Analogy*, Part ii. ch. 3.

to be feared, on the supposition of their entire exemption from the circumstances of their historical situation being admissible.”¹ J. T. Beck, a pre-eminent biblical theologian, writes: “Inspiration extends merely to the mysteries of the divine kingdom, to spiritual truth, to the external and human only so far as it stands in essential connection with the former.” Martensen says: “In relation to things pertaining to the kingdom of God, the apostolic consciousness is raised above all the limitations and imperfections belonging to what is temporal. But in relation to all that is not an inextinguishable article of fundamental truth, it is liable to the uncertainty attaching to the temporal and finite; and this finiteness and relativity must leave its impress on the apostolic writings.”² Lange, Tholuck, Pressensé, and Godet write to the same effect. This distinction is drawn by most continental scholars of the orthodox school to-day, scholars who follow in the steps of Delitzsch.

Something has been said already respecting the bearings of modern Old Testament criticism (p. 41), but there are several other points worthy of consideration. It is useless to condemn indiscriminately. Argument can only be met by

¹ *System of Christian Doctrine*, vol. ii. p. 196.

² *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 402.

argument. Truth has nothing to fear in the long run. There is no ground even for asserting a necessary connection between the anti-supernatural beliefs of writers like Kuenen, Wellhausen and others and their theories of the structure of the Old Testament. Professor G. Adam Smith reminds us that firm believers in supernatural revelation, like Robertson Smith, have held similar ground.¹ Scholars like Drs. Koenig, Strack, Koehler, von Orelli, Volck, etc., occupy the same doctrinal position as the late Franz Delitzsch, and like him have felt themselves compelled to modify traditional views.

Professor Adam Smith also remarks that criticism affects a smaller portion of the Old Testament than we might at first suppose. It is chiefly in the historical books that the stress is felt. The prophetic books proper are less affected, their substance of moral teaching not at all. Nothing vital is concerned in most of the questions of date and authorship raised, or in the use of older documents by the writers. Many Old Testament books are anonymous. We have a parallel case in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In early Christian days there was a similar diversity of opinion respecting its authorship as at present, with the difference that then the majority were

¹ *The Preaching of the Old Testament to the Age*, p. 33 f.

favourable to the Pauline authorship, now the majority are adverse. Here is surely a proof that the canonical character of a book is not bound up with a particular authorship. As to the minuteness with which some critics are able by subjective methods to assign even verses and clauses to different authors, we may safely disregard it.

Perhaps we may say that the tendency of present discussion is to modify extreme views, a tendency as noticeable on the critical side as on the other. An interesting example of this is given by Dr. Driver in his new Commentary on Deuteronomy, where we are told that what is new in the book is the form, not the matter.¹ The centrifugal movement is over, the centripetal force is again asserting itself. What is certain is that on this subject the present is a transition age, and all transition periods bring suspense and perplexity and the need of patient waiting. In this as in other matters the just must often live by faith.

So far as ascertained results go, there can be no doubt that the gain of the new historical methods of study is immense. The Old Testament is a new book to us. It comes with a new message from God to our age, a message as new

¹ *Introduction*, p. lvi.

and real as to the contemporaries of the writers. Now that each book and each group of books are better understood in their historical origin and setting, they have new meaning and greater force. What other book in the world would be capable of such a revival? "It is no exaggeration to say that the prophetic Scriptures are at this moment inspiring more men, speaking to more men for God, giving more men larger and fresher conceptions of things divine and human, than at any previous age in the history of the Church."¹ The Old Testament is now put to better use, as its place is better understood in the economy of revelation, than ever before. The grandeur of its ethical teaching is more fully appreciated. New light is constantly breaking forth from it. It has teaching, especially on the social and national side of morals, which our age specially needs.

How will historical views of the construction of Scripture affect the proof of its divine character? They will not touch the internal evidence at all. Professor Robertson Smith said: "If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the Fathers of the Protestant Church, 'Because the Bible is the only record

¹ Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 214. The whole of Lecture ix. is suggestive on this subject.

of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in Him His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.'” Of course this witness applies only to the spiritual substance of Scripture. It will also vary in relation to different portions of Scripture, culminating in relation to the Gospels. In reference to the latter Dr. Denney says: “We do not need to become historical critics before we can believe in Christ and be saved by Him. The Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word of the evangelists in our hearts, gives us, independent of any criticism, a full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the revelation of God made in Him.”¹ Here surely is the essential truth of Scripture, certified by the consciousness of the believer. Everyone may have it. No doubt the caution of 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15 must ever be borne in mind. But the difference between the natural and the spiritual man is no necessary one. There is no spiritual man who was not once a natural man, and the same change is possible to

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 207.

all. The internal witness leaves ample room for the work of criticism.

With regard to the other evidences, nothing but their form is changed in the historical method. The change is similar to the one made in the design argument by the theory of physical evolution. The evidence is spread over a wider surface and is gathered in larger masses. The evidence of prophecy is an example. Instead of the piecemeal method, the entire Old Testament system is seen to be pervaded by the prophetic spirit. Professor Robertson Smith argued that prophecy and the Old Testament as a whole were less explicable by natural causes on the new theories than on the old.

The newest fashion in rationalist interpretation is the attempt to set up the teaching of Christ in the Gospels as the sole binding authority for Christians. This is the ground taken by the Ritschlian school represented by Dr. Wendt in his *Teaching of Jesus*. The synoptics are regarded as the chief authorities for Christ's teaching, the Fourth Gospel being used only as a supplement and with considerable reserve. On this scheme the teaching of the Epistles is swept aside as not binding on Christians, although it is acknowledged to be valuable for the light it throws on the belief of the Church in its earliest days. Paul and John

are as much private teachers as any Christian theologians since. Let us take as an example the doctrine of Christ's propitiatory death. It is not questioned that Paul holds the doctrine as plainly as any modern Protestant or Catholic ; but it was merely an idea borrowed from "rabbinical Judaism"¹ and applied to Christ's death. But let it be noted that Dr. Wendt cannot exclude the doctrine from Christ's own teaching without affirming that the words "unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28) were no part of Christ's words but an addition by the evangelist.² On what authority is this assertion made? None whatever, so far as the authority of MSS. and various readings is concerned. The only reason is that Dr. Wendt's theory requires the omission of the words. With just as much reason someone else might assert that the previous words of the verse are not Christ's. Thus even the denial of authority to the teaching of the Epistles does not secure the end desired. The Gospels themselves must be revised in the most arbitrary way. And this is done in wholesale fashion by Dr. Wendt and other writers of the same school. Everything which does not square with their conception of what Christianity is must be cut out of Christ's teaching.

¹ *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii. p. 243.

² *Ibid.* p. 240.

It is not a little remarkable that Dr. Wendt acknowledges that the doctrine in question formed part of the belief of the apostolic Church. We are told that the disciples, who in obedience to Christ's words repeated the observance of the Supper, and were thus kept in "lively remembrance" of His words, remodelled His teaching, making His death the ground of forgiveness. Paul made this idea "the foundation of his whole gospel." The words "unto remission of sins" were added by the first evangelist under the impression that he was simply developing the meaning of what is said in the earlier part of ver. 28. Dr. Wendt says: "I believe also that this interpretation and application of the words of Jesus is quite justifiable from the standpoint of the Christian Church." Only, we must not suppose that we are here dealing with the thought of Jesus Himself! That is, Dr. Wendt and his colleagues know Christ's meaning better than the evangelists and apostles; out of their superior information they can revise Gospels and Epistles, Paul and John! Dr. Wendt argues that, because Christ did not in His earlier teaching about forgiveness refer to His death as the ground, He would not do so at a later period, as if no progress in teaching were possible to Christ! If the apostles, who were

Christ's companions or were in close intercourse with these companions, could so utterly mistake His meaning on a cardinal matter, how can we trust any part of their testimony about Him? And if we cannot trust them, how can we trust speculative writers of the nineteenth century? It seems to the present writer that Dr. Wendt's admission is fatal to his position. The supposition that the immediate disciples of Christ misunderstood or perverted His teaching on such a subject, is a precarious foundation for any theory.

There is great force in Dr. Denney's contention that this central doctrine is "guaranteed by the witness of the Spirit." "The doctrine of an atonement for sins, made in Christ's death, has never been accepted in the Church simply as the speculation of three accidentally privileged men—Peter, Paul, and John. The authority it enjoys and has enjoyed from the beginning is due to this, that the Holy Spirit has borne witness by and with that doctrine in men's hearts, making them sure that in accepting Christ's death thus interpreted, they were accepting the very soul of God's redeeming love. If there is one truth in the whole Bible which is covered by the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti*, and by the consenting witness of Christians in all ages,

it is this. It has an authority in it or along with it by which it vindicates itself to faith as divinely and infallibly true; it asserts itself irresistibly, and beyond a doubt, as the supreme revelation of God's judgment and mercy to penitent souls."¹

The suggestion of a distinction between Christ's personal teaching and that in the Epistles is not quite new. Robertson of Brighton thought it startling to suppose that the Epistles contained a more complete account of Christian doctrine than Christ's own words. Dr. Dale does not find it at all startling. He points out that Christ's teaching is not complete or self-explanatory. Christ came not so much to preach the gospel as to make it. "The real truth is that while He came to preach the gospel, His chief object in coming was that there might be a gospel to preach."² The work of the artist is different from that of the expositor of art. Turner is best understood in the work of his great disciple. If the account of Christ's teaching in John xiv.—xvi. is genuine, Christ distinctly contemplated such a continuation of His teaching as we have in the Epistles. But to break up the unity of the New Testament in the way proposed is a complete departure from what has always been the basis of Christian faith.

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 222.

² *The Atonement*, 7th ed. p. 46.

If this standard were the right one, why do not Paul and the other apostles constantly appeal to it? It is remarkable that there is so little of such appeal in the Epistles. The ground on which the apostolic Church stood is not at all the ground now proposed. Paul claimed authority in his own name. It is to be regretted that Dr. Horton in his *Teaching of Jesus* favours the new distinction. How difficult, even impossible, he finds it to explain the saving effect of Christ's death while excluding the teaching of Paul, is evident from his chapter on "The Death of Jesus." Most readers will pronounce such explanations as those given on p. 246 f. unintelligible. The object of the distinction introduced by the new school is evidently to reduce Christianity to simply ethical teaching.

We repeat that if the argument of the former sections holds good, the credibility of Scripture, even apart from inspiration, is such as can be affirmed of no other book in the world. Inspiration is an additional security. And then there is the endorsement of universal Christian experience. Putting aside a few books, which may be said to belong to the circumference of Scripture, the Bible is recognised as divine by a great cloud of witnesses, who have put its professions to the test in the trials and needs of their own lives.

This recognition is infinitely more impressive to us than any by Churches and Councils. It amounts to verification by experiment on a scale that can be claimed by nothing else. Against this vast body of testimony what avails the adverse judgment of those who have never tried the test? If Scripture does not satisfy intellectual curiosity, it never fails to satisfy burdened consciences and wistful, weary hearts, bringing from God Himself good news of pardon, peace, and eternal life for all men. "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times" (Ps. xii. 6).

Jesus, my God, I know His name,
His name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.

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